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Christy Moore

"I'm hoping to achieve
Tony Bennett's longevity!"



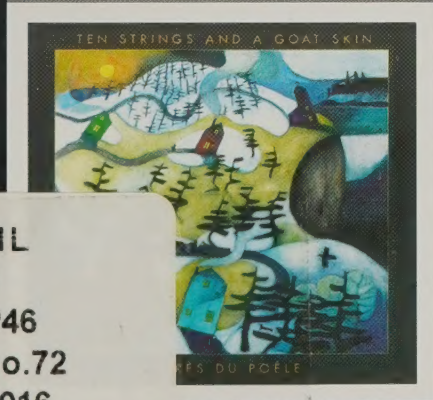
Reviews

Kate Rusby
"Beautiful. Comforting.
Timeless."

penguin eggs



Album of the Year



blackie and the rodeo kings
earls of leicester
nua
lynched

Issue No. 72 winter 2016 \$5.99



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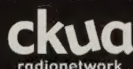
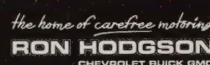
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Cover Story

48 100 Mile House

Edmonton-based, husband-and-wife team Denise MacKay and Peter Stone, bare their souls on a new album of impeccable poise, virtue, and, at times, tragedy.

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THE SOUNDTRACK FOR A HAPPY CHRISTMAS FOR YEARS TO COME!

NATALIE MACMASTER AND DONNELL LEAHY

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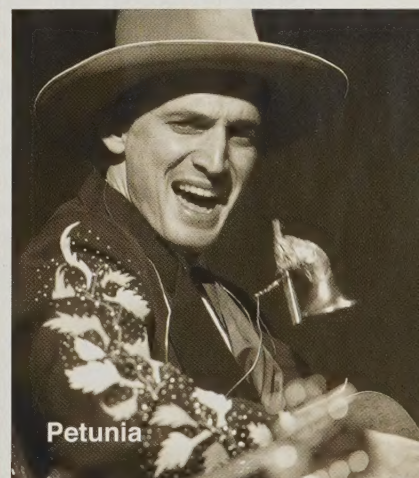
Blackie and the Rodeo Kings



Red Tail Ring



Coco Love Alcorn



Petunia



Lynched



Earls of Leicester

penguin eggs

The Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album *Penguin Eggs* — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such diverse artists as Bob Dylan, Warren Zevon and Kate Rusby.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. In 2012, however, he finally made an emotional comeback, performing at several events throughout the summer. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. It's available through Topic Records. This magazine strives to reiterate its spirit.

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Editorial



Bob Dylan's standing as one of the world's leading cultural figures received further affirmation when he was named the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. His citation read, in part: "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition". That, of course, caused much wailing and gnashing of teeth in certain quarters. The author Irvine Welsh, recognized for his depictions of necrophilia, considered it "an ill-conceived nostalgia award."

It didn't help matters that Dylan took two weeks to acknowledge this honour, only to then announce he will not attend his investiture in Stockholm. Well, that really stuck in the craw of convention. "Impolite and arrogant," one member of Sweden's Nobel academy described Dylan's behaviour. Did anyone honestly expect a songwriter, who wrote such a passionate elegy as *Masters Of War*, to show up for a ceremony funded by the proceeds of dynamite? Lest we forget: "Let me ask you one question / Is your money that good / Will it buy you forgiveness / Do you think that it could / I think you will find / When your death takes its toll / All the money you made / Will never buy back your soul".

Locally, Dave Bidini offered handbags at 10 paces on the pages of the *Globe and Mail*, basically reiterating

Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Robert Lowell, who said that Dylan wasn't a poet because he, "leaned on the crutch of his guitar". "The lyric," added Bidini, "hides its weaknesses through melody while prose has to be strong enough to withstand the vacuum of its own existence." Oddly enough, Matthew Zapruder said pretty much the same thing in *The Boston Review*. Zapruder also said, "It seems absurd to me to contend that lyrics, inherently, have less literary merit than poetry".

Consider this: African-American males carried signs that read, "I Am A Man" during the dark, difficult days of the Civil Rights Movement. The term "boy" in the South was used as a racist insult, implying a subservient status of being less than a man. When a 21-year-old Bob Dylan wrote, "*How many roads must a man walk down / Before you call him a man?*", was the strength and poignancy of that question somehow weakened because it was sang accompanied by an acoustic guitar?

In all, Dylan has recorded numerous indelible songs on 37 studio albums—a body of work worthy of a critical study published by Cambridge University for its American Studies Series. But let's be clear, despite numerous reports to the contrary, Dylan was not the first songwriter to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. India's Rabindranath Tagore won it, too, in 1913. Playwrights, journalists, even Winston Churchill won it, for his speeches during the Second World War. Clearly, it's a prize that justifies a broad interpretation of literature.

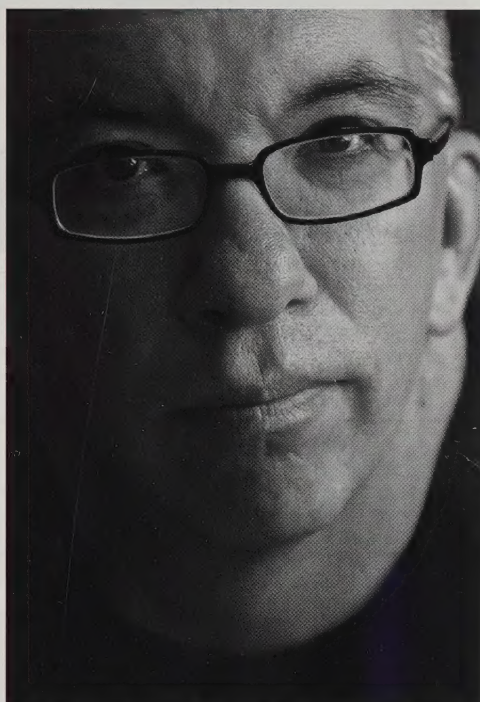
In his speech as Person of the Year for the MusiCares charity in 2014, Dylan told the audience, "I learned lyrics and how to write them from folk songs". So let's all raise a generous glass to a fellow traveller and his astounding achievements.

— Roddy Campbell

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The Record That Changed My Life

James Keelaghan



Acclaimed songwriter, James Keelaghan, reflects on the king of calypso's trail-blazing double live LP, *Belafonte At Carnegie Hall*.

I was raised in a bungalow in northwest Calgary with my six siblings, my Irish dad, and my English mum. It's only logical, then, that when my parents took me to my first concert at the age of 10 it was Harry Belafonte. There was no way they were getting away with not taking me. They had inadvertently turned me into a Belafonte fanboy at the age of six.

That is the year that I discovered the Harry Belafonte double-album set, *Live At Carnegie Hall*. It lived in the small stack of records my parents owned, rubbing sleeves with the Clancy Brothers, Sian O'Raida, and Danny Kaye. By the time I found it, it had already had a workout. My mum loved Belafonte and my dad, though often critical of almost any music not Irish, was a fan as well. They both appreciated showmanship.

I could mime the whole album perfectly, beginning to end—every turn of his voice, every quip and ad lib. While I don't act out the LP any longer, I still listen to it all the time. It's in my iTunes library and it's still well played.

It is the live recording against which all other live recordings need to be judged. In

fact, it was one of the first live recordings of a popular music performer. It was continually in print until RCA ceased printing LPs. It is pristine, in the moment, and it captures the room perfectly. Belafonte's performance and pacing are nothing short of mesmerizing.

While there was a 47-piece orchestra under the leadership of Bob Corman, the heavy lifting instrumentally was carried by a four-piece band consisting of two guitars, one percussionist playing bongos and congas, and a double bass player. Have a look at the mic-ing on the album cover. No pickups, no cords, just the music going out into the air.

The 12-minute version of *Matilda* is a master class in the art of the singalong. The humour between and within the songs is by turns subtle, raucous, and, occasionally, drawing-room risqué. The selection of material is superb. It's not just a bunch of songs; the set list has an arc—as they say in the writing biz—a storyline.

Through it all, Belafonte shows the utmost respect for his musicians and the audience. He's playful, articulate, thoughtful.

And, of course, it was a benefit concert. Two sold-out nights at Carnegie Hall to raise money for The New London School

and Wiltwyck School, both of which have fascinating and progressive histories.

The two nights are important: it gave producer Bob Bollard and engineer Bob Simpson two chances at success at what Bollard described as a "reckless recording risk".

"You can count on one hand the number of times recording microphones happen to be 'on the scene' at the right time and the right place to capture an inspired moment of performance. This is one of those few," he said in the liner notes.

All these details I found out after the fact—they were not being processed in the mind of that six-year-old. The six-year-old loved it on a visceral level and didn't have the vocabulary to voice all the feeling. My young body knew that this was music that moved me, physically and emotionally. Something on that record made me want to be a performer. Something on the record made me want to be a singer. Further more, it provided a perfect template for each. How to pace a set, the importance of dynamics in song, and a hundred other lessons are there for the learning.

There are times, still, when I imagine an alternate universe where I am Belafonte. Somewhere inside me I am still miming that album."



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February 5 PG Playhouse
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Coco Love Alcorn (ON) **Andrea Ramolo & Matt Epp** (ON)
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February 9 Fore Bistro
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Celebrate Music of the North


Matt Patershuk (AB) **Samson's Delilah** (BC)

February 10 PG Playhouse
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Wendy MacIsaac & Troy MacGillivray (Cape Breton / Nova Scotia) **Alasdair Fraser & Natalie Haas** (Scotland / California)
Special Guest To Be Announced

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Artists and venues subject to change.

stingray radio

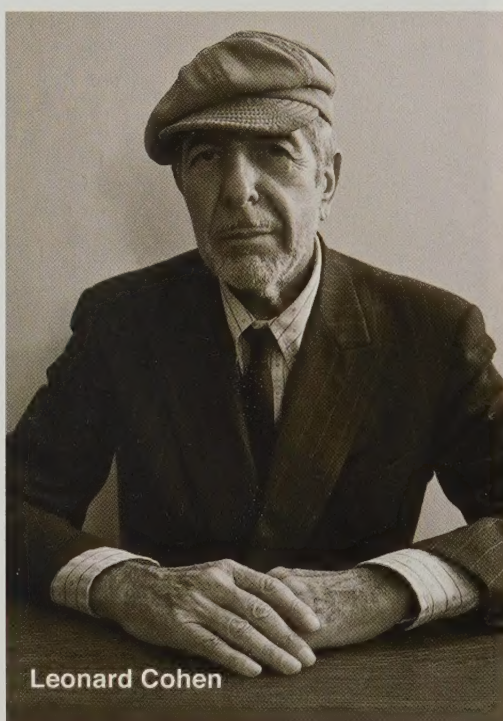
- Kacy & Clayton**
Strange Country (Big White Cloud)
- Thom Swift**
The Legend of Roy Black (Independent)
- Maria Dunn**
Gathering (Distant Whisper Music)
- Matt Pattershuk**
I Was So Fond of You (Black Hen)
- Kaia Kater**
Nine Pin (Kingswood Records)
- Tim Moxam**
Soft Summer (Roaring Girl)
- Hillsburn**
In the Battle Years (Groundswell / Warner)
- Skydiggers**
Here Without You: The Songs of Gene Clark (Latent Recordings)
- The Spinney Brothers**
Living The Dream (Mountain Fever)
- The High Bar Gang**
Someday The Heart Will Trouble The Mind (True North)

The most-played folk and roots discs played nationally by Stingray Music throughout August, September and October, 2016.

fred's

- Rum Ragged**
Rum Ragged (Independent)
- The Once**
We Win Some, We Lose Some (Independent)
- Fretboard Journey**
Fretboard Journey (Independent)
- Leonard Cohen**
You Want it Darker (Columbia)
- Ron Hynes**
Later That Same Life (Independent)

Based on album sales for August, September, and October, 2016, at Freds Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. John's, NL, 1C 1G5



colin linden's all-time top 10



The Band
Music From The Big Pink (Capitol)

Bruce Cockburn
Nothing But A Burning Light (True North)

Willie P Bennett
Hobo's Taunt (Independent)

Bob Dylan
Blood On The Tracks (Sony)

Emmylou Harris
Wrecking Ball (Asylum)

Buddy Miller
Cruel Moon (Shout Factory)

Robert Plant and Alison Krauss
Raising Sands (Rounder)

Muddy Waters
Folk Singer (Chess)

Lucinda Williams
Car Wheels On A Gravel Road (Mercury Records)

Howlin' Wolf
Rockin' Chair (Chess)

Colin Linden and Blackie And The Rodeo Kings latest release is Kings and Kings. Our feature on B.A.R.K. runs on page 32.

blackbyrd

- Leonard Cohen**
You Want it Darker (Columbia)
- Blackie And The Rodeo Kings**
Kings And Kings (F.U.M)
- John K Samson**
Winter Wheat (Anti)
- Bon Iver**
22 a million (Jagjaguwar)
- Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds**
Skeleton Tree (Kobalt)
- John Prine**
For Better, Or Worse (Oh Boy)
- Tim Buckley**
Lady, Give Me Your Key (Future days)
- Wilco**
Schmilco (dBpm)
- Cass McCombs**
Mangy Love (Anti)
- Hope Sandoval**
Through the Devil Softly (Nettwerk)

Based on album sales for August, Sept., October, 2016 at Blackbyrd Myozik, 10442-82 Ave., Edmonton, AB, T6E 2A2 and at 1126-17 Ave., SW, Calgary, AB, T2T 0B4

highlife

1. **Frightrns**
Nothing More To Say (Daptone)
2. **Michael Kiwanuka**
Love & Hate (Polydor)
3. **Birds Of Chicago**
Real Midnight (Five Head)
4. **St. Paul & The Broken Bones**
Sea Of Noise (Sony)
5. **Quantic**
1000 Watts (Tru Thoughts)
6. **A Tribe Called Red**
We Are The Halluci Nation (Radicalized)
7. **Jaimeo Brown Transcendence**
Work Songs (Motema)
8. **Joe Driscoll & Sekou Kouyate**
Monistic Theory (Cumbancha)
9. **Derek Gripper**
Libraries On Fire (Independent)
10. **Tanya Tagaq**
Retribution (Six Shooter)

Based on album sales for August, September and October, 2016, at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5

heritage

1. **Martin Harley and Daniel Kimbro**
Live At Southern Ground (Independent)
2. **Blackie And The Rodeo Kings**
Kings And Kings (F:UM)
3. **John Prime**
For Better Or Worse (Sony)
4. **Adrian Nation**
Live At Crossroads (Independent)
5. **Claire Lynch**
North By South (Compass)
6. **Paul Kelly**
Seven Sonnets (Cooking Vinyl)
7. **Wilco**
Schmilco (Anti)
8. **Leonard Cohen**
You Want it Darker (Columbia)
9. **Arthur Big Boy Crudup**
1941-62 (Acrobat Music)
10. **Sarah Jarosz**
Undercurrent (Sugar Hill)

Based on album sales for August, September, October 2016, at Heritage Posters & Music, 1316-11 Ave., SW, Calgary, AB, T3C 0M9



Birds of Chicago

backstreet

1. **Isaiah Lightning**
Starry Crown (Independent)
2. **Strumbellas**
Hope (Six Shooter)
3. **Lisa LeBlanc**
Why You Wanna Leave, Runaway Queen? (BonSound)
4. **Tomato Tomato**
I go where you go (Porch Light Studios)
5. **John K. Samson**
Winter Wheat (Anti)
6. **Daniel Romano**
Mosey (New West)
7. **Blackie And The Rodeo Kings**
Kings And Kings (F:UM)
8. **Leonard Cohen**
You Want it Darker (Columbia)
9. **Brent Mason**
All the Pretty Horses (Left Handed Records)
10. **Paul Reddick**
Ride the One (Stony Plain)

Based on album sales for Sept., Oct., and Nov., 2016, at Backstreet Records, at their Saint John and Fredrickton, NB, stores.

soundscapes

1. **Wilco**
Schmilco (Anti)
2. **Mavis Staples**
Livin' On A High Note (Anti)
3. **Leonard Cohen**
You Want it Darker (Columbia)
4. **Angel Olsen**
My Woman (Jagjaguwar)
5. **A Tribe Called Red**
We Are The Halluci Nation (Sony)
6. **Drive By Truckers**
American Band (ATO)
7. **Van Morrison**
Keep Me Singing (Sony)
8. **Colvin & Earle**
Colvin & Earle (Fantasy)
9. **John K. Samson**
Winter Wheat (Anti)
10. **OST**
Heartworn Highway (Light In The Attic)

Based on album sales for August, September, and October, 2016, at Soundscapes, 572 College Street, Toronto, On, M6G 1B3

ckua radio

1. **Altameda**
Dirty Rain (Independent)
2. **Nick Waterhouse**
Never Twice (Innovative Leisure)
3. **The Stray Birds**
Magic Fire (Yep Roc)
4. **Claire Lynch**
North By South (Compass)
5. **Big Dave Mclean**
Better The Devil You Know (Black Hen)
6. **Lisa Hannigan**
At Swim (ATO)
7. **Blackie And The Rodeo Kings**
Kings And Kings (F:UM)
8. **Coco Love Alcorn**
Wonderland (Independent)
9. **Sarah Jarosz**
Undercurrent (Sugar Hill)
10. **Colin James**
Blue Highways (True North)
11. **Lydia Loveless**
Real (Bloodshot)
12. **Tahoma**
Hideaway (Independent)
13. **Rachelle Van Zanten**
Little Spruce (Independent)
14. **Sam Bush**
Storyman (Sugar Hill)
15. **Ana Alcaide**
Leyenda (ARC)
16. **Shovels & Rope**
Little Seeds (New West)
17. **C.R. Avery**
All The Angels Didn't Scare Me (Independent)
18. **Lisa Leblanc**
Why Do You Wanna Leave, Runaway Queen? (Bonsound)
19. **Bill Kirchen & Austin De Lone**
Transatlantica (Red House)
20. **Whitney**
Light Upon The Lake (Secretly Canadian)

The most-played folk, roots and world music discs on CKUA radio - www.ckua.org - throughout August, September and October, 2016.



The Stray Birds

1934-2016

Leonard Cohen

Many were listening to Leonard Cohen just before the profoundly sad news of his death went viral Nov. 7. Some, becoming acquainted with his latest recording, *You Want It Darker*, acclaimed among the best of his 14 albums.

For the greater part of 82 years, he wrote, recorded and performed a sometimes bleak, sometimes joyful soundtrack of our times, world-wide, even from his death bed.

My initiation began with a few dollars left from purchasing first-year university textbooks, spent on *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956), published when Cohen was an undergraduate. Its intellectual and spiritual hunger, melancholy, and black humour were the most easily understood and accessible in the campus bookstore. Through dog-eared and thumb-worn collections, *Spice Box of Earth*, *Flowers For Hitler*, *Parasites Of Heaven*, and novels, *The Favourite Game* and *Beautiful Losers*, I followed his search for a “state of grace, a kind of balance in the chaos of existence”.

Five decades ago, Cohen was as big and celebrated as it got in Can-Lit and culture. He befriended fellow poet Irving Layton, later recalling: “I taught him how to dress; he taught me how to live forever”.

Restless and relentless, he retreated to the Greek island of Hydra—where cars were banned and mules carried water up steep paths to houses. For \$1,500 from a small inheritance, he purchased a simple, white-washed space,

shared with one of his many muses, Marianne Ihlen and her young son.

“I met him in the mid-’60s,” Judy Collins told me three years ago. “He’d been in Greece and was unaware of the folk boom, heading to Nashville from Montreal, with a notion of pursuing country music to supplement his income. In my living room, he apologized for his singing and guitar playing, even doubting that what he was writing were songs. I was mesmerized, wanted more.”

“After he finished writing *Suzanne*, he sang it over the phone and I invited him to an anti-Vietnam War town hall. I dragged him onstage, but he stopped partway, pleading, ‘I can’t go on’.” “I pushed him back to the mic and the crowd went wild.”

Cohen was 33 when his recording debut, *Songs Of Leonard Cohen* (1967), was released. He was an original voice, haunting, hypnotic, a whisper-like rasp, unconventional, unprecedented, more economical, in a formal marriage of the sacred and profane.

Critics’ labels included “godfather of gloom”, “poet laureate of pessimism”, and “music to slit your wrists to”. “Sometimes, I stumble out of bed, look at myself in the mirror and say, ‘Lighten up, Cohen’,” he told audiences that began to number as many as 600,000 (Isle of Wight festival). Concerts, he said, made him feel like “some parrot chained to his stand.”

But he could shift from darkness in a single stanza—in *Closing Time*: “All the women tear

their blouses off. And the men they dance on the polka dots”. Or, “I said to Hank Williams: how lonely does it get? Hank Williams hasn’t answered yet. But I hear him coughing all night long, floors above me in the Tower of Song”.

Informal flamenco guitar lessons in his 20s transformed “six chords, and a guitar pattern, that has been the basis of all my songs, and all my music”. And he did not tame performance anxiety, until he pursued Zen as a discipline, a practice of investigation, rather than a religion.

He spent five years in deep meditation and silence near L.A. and two in Bombay. Meanwhile, his manager and former lover, Kelley Lynch, embezzled his life savings. Broke, he went back to the studio and on tour, spectacularly. From 2008 to 2014—his spiritual strength evident—in an unmatched late-life renaissance.

His *Hallelujah* is possibly the most-sung-all occasions-song of this century. It went through dozens of drafts and head-banging on hotel room floors.

Nobel laureate Bob Dylan compared Cohen’s songs to “prayers...great songs, deep and truthful, multidimensional, surprisingly melodic, they make you think and feel”. *Hallelujah*, he said, is “beautifully constructed and the point-blank I-know-you-better-than-you-know-yourself aspect has plenty of resonance for me.” It’s been recorded so often, Cohen jokingly called for a moratorium.

Anthem, took 10 years to finish: “Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.”

Last summer, when he learned she was dying, Cohen scribbled: “Well, Marianne, it’s come to this time when we are really so old and our bodies are falling apart and I think I will follow you very soon. Know that I am so close behind you that if you stretch out your hand, I think you can reach mine. Now, I just want to wish you a very good journey. Goodbye, old friend. Endless love, see you down the road.”

In an engrossing October *New Yorker* profile, “confined to barracks” in a modest second floor, he spoke to millions: “I’ve got some work to do. Take care of business. I am ready to die. I hope it’s not too uncomfortable. That’s about it for me.”

Now one for the ages, Leonard Cohen is gone, leaving behind so many broken offerings for broken hearts and spirits.

— Bruce Mason

Please see J. Poet’s personal tribute to Leonard Cohen on Page 14.

Stanley Dural Jr.

Zydeco Pioneer

Born 1947

Accordionist and zydeco emissary Stanley (Buckwheat) Dural Jr. led one of the world's great party bands: Buckwheat Zydeco. He sang in French Creole and in English, leading his band in R&B, two-steps, waltzes, blues, funk, and a southern rock edge, all of which kept dance floors bustling.

When Dural signed with Chris Blackwell's Island Records in 1987 and released *On A Night Like This*, he became the first zydeco artists to sign with a major label. That year, Buckwheat Zydeco appeared on the hit movie *The Big Easy*. The band would go on to record and tour with the likes of Eric Clapton, U2, Paul Simon, Keith Richards, and Willie Nelson.

Dural died in hospital Sept. 24 from lung and throat cancer in Lafayette, LA. He was 68.

Born in Lafayette in 1947, Dural grew up in a musical family. His father played accordion and Jr. began playing piano at an early age before the organ, as he developed into a noted session musician recording with the likes of Joe Tex and Clarence (Gatemouth) Brown.

Nicknamed after the "Buckwheat" character on *The Little Rascals* because of his braided hair, he formed the funk outfit Buckwheat and the Hitchhikers in the '70s and enjoyed regional success. In 1976, however, he reluctantly joined zydeco pioneer Clifton Chenier's Red Hot Louisiana Band. That would prove a major turning point in Dural's career.

He fully immersed himself in zydeco, learned to play the accordion, and launched Buckwheat Zydeco in 1978. They released albums for folk and blues labels such as Blues Unlimited, Black Top, and Rounder before signing with Island. The Chicago-based Alligator Records released the last Buckwheat Zydeco album, *Lay Your Burden Down*, in 2009. It won a Grammy Award for Best Zydeco or Cajun Music Album of the Year.

— Roddy Campbell



Stanley Dural Jr.



The Weavers: Pete Seeger, Lee Hays, Ronnie Gilbert and Fred Hellerman

Fred Hellerman

Musician and Composer

Born 1927

Along with Ronnie Gilbert, Lee Hays, and with Pete Seeger, Fred Hellerman was a founding member of The Weavers. The folksinger, guitarist, and songwriter lived a life through what are jocularly known as the Chinese curse of the 'interesting times'. He was born the youngest of three children of Latvian Jewish stock on May 13, 1927, in Brooklyn, NY, more precisely in Flatbush. Like all his fellow band mates in The Weavers, a group founded in 1949 and a step on from The Almanacs, his activism and tastes in song were forged in the temper of the times. It was an era in which radical, progressive politics and arch conservatism tussled and vied. In the case of The Weavers, they fell foul of anti-communist blacklisting through the insidious McCarthy-era Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television hue and cry. This benighted era effectively shut down their career.

Hellerman survived. His song and post-nuclear anthem *Come Away Melinda* gained him new audiences through its many covers, ranging from Harry Belafonte through Judy Collins and Bobby Gentry to the rock group Uriah Heep. While he was outspoken to cantankerous on occasions about upcoming talent, he could also be exceedingly gracious, too. He spotted and supported talent, for example, playing guitar on Joan Baez and Judy Collins's LP debuts; and most particularly producing Arlo Guthrie's phenomenon of an album *Alice's Restaurant* in 1967. He died on Sept. 1, 2016, in Weston, CT.

— Ken Hunt



Oscar Brand

Radio Host, Musician, Author

Born 1927

Multi-talented, Winnipeg-born Oscar Brand recorded some 100 folk albums, wrote an estimated 200 songs, composed Broadway musicals, created TV shows, made documentary films and published eight song books. And yet he is primarily known as the host of *Folksong Festival*, a radio program that ran for 70 years on New York public radio station WNYC.

The first show aired Dec. 11, 1945, and Brand's guests would include Woody Guthrie, Lead Belly, The Weavers, Harry Belafonte, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Joan Baez, literally a *Who's Who* of the folk world down through the years. He broadcast his last show on Sept. 14 and died at his home in Great Neck, NY, from

pneumonia on Sept. 30. He was 96.

A man of resolute principles, Brand invited blacklisted artists such as Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson on his show throughout the McCarthy era of the Cold War. Though not a member of the Communist Party, he felt compelled to support free speech. In 2005, he won a prestigious Peabody Award for decades of service to folk music and its performers. *Folksong Festival* is listed in *Guinness World Records* as radio's longest-running show with a single host.

Born Feb. 7, 1920, Brand moved with his parents to the U.S. at the age of seven, where they eventually settled in New York during the Depression. He sang from an early age and met Lead Belly, Burl Ives, and Josh White in the '30s, performed alongside Woody Guthrie, and earned a B.A. in psychology at Brooklyn College. Brand helped Pete Seeger launch *People's Songs* newsletter, which eventually grew into *Sing Out!* magazine. While he wrote *A Guy Is A Guy*—a No. 1 hit for Doris Day in 1952—and *Something To Sing About*—once considered a possible national anthem for Canada—Brand never developed the reputation as a performer enjoyed by many of his peers.

He did, however, sit on the board of the ground-breaking Newport Folk Festival and helped start *Sesame Street*. Its puppeteer, Jim Henson, named Oscar the Grouch after Brand.

From 1963 to 1966, he hosted the Canadian CTV show *Let's Sing Out*, whose diverse myriad of guests included Simon & Garfunkel, Lonnie Johnson, Gordon Lightfoot, The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, and a young Joni Mitchell. In *Penguin Eggs* No. 46, he listed his heroes as Eleanor Roosevelt, John Huston, and Jean Ritchie.

— Roddy Campbell

John D. Loudermilk

Hit Maker

Born 1934

John D. Loudermilk, author of such enduring hits as *Tobacco Road* and *Indian Reservation*, died at his home in Christiana, TN, on Sept. 21. He was 82.

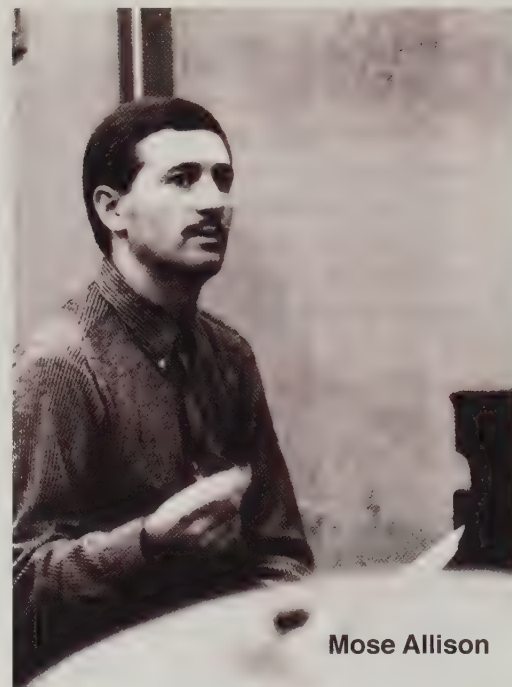
Loudermilk's illustrious catalogue has been covered by such diverse artists as Chet Atkins, Eddie Cochran, Johnny Cash, Gram Parsons, The Everly Brothers, The Jefferson Airplane, Norah Jones and Marilyn Manson. *Tobacco Road*, alone, has been covered almost 200 times, with its greatest success coming in 1964 when Britain's Nashville Teens placed it high in both the U.S. and U.K. pop charts.

John D. Loudermilk—the middle initial didn't stand for anything—was born March 31, 1934, in Durham, NC. His cousins Ira and Charlie Loudermilk were the renowned country duo The Louvin Brothers.

As a teenager, Loudermilk took to writing songs and dropped out of Campbell College in Buies Creek in 1958 to move to Nashville. Chet Atkins quickly spotted his talents and he soon joined the celebrated publishing company Acuff-Rose. There he began churning out hits in every style. His biggest, the multi-platinum single *Indian Reservation (The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian)*, became a No. 1 hit in the U.S. for Paul Revere and the Raiders in 1971. Loudermilk received a Grammy Award in 1967 for best liner notes for his album *Suburban Attitudes in Country Verse*.

He was inducted into the Country Hall of Fame in 1976 but turned his focus to ethnomusicology in the 1980s.

— Roddy Campbell



Mose Allison

Mose Allison

Blues and Jazz Giant

Born 1942

The reach of Mose Allison's music was remarkable. His songs travelled. His take on *Parchman Farm* formed the basis for John Mayall's version and appeared on his hugely influential 1966 album *Blues Breakers* with Eric Clapton. Another song, *Back Country Suite: Blues* under its alternative title of *Young Man Blues* opened the original vinyl edition of The Who's *Live At Leeds* in 1970.

Your Mind Is On Vacation—skip-beat, "... and your mouth is working overtime"—tickled Elvis Costello's fancy enough for him to cover it. Leon Russell covered *I'm Smashed*. Perhaps most tellingly, Van Morrison, Georgie Fame, Ben Sidran, and Allison himself collaborated on the 1996 jazz bestseller *Tell Me Something: The Songs of Mose Allison*. His aperçu-barbed, wisecracking songs delivered in southern-inflected soft tones hooked droves of listeners.

Mose John Allison Jr. was born on his grandfather's farm in Tippo, MS, on Nov. 11, 1927. Aged five, he began formal piano studies but what turned his head the most were blues, boogie-woogie, and jazz jukebox discs.

His tasteful solo debut LP *Back Country Suite* appeared in 1957 on Prestige with Taylor LaFargue on bass and Frank Isola on drums.

Over the following years, he recorded steadily, cutting LPs for Columbia, Atlantic, Elektra, and Blue Note. His 2010 album *The Way Of The World* for ANTI- found him in the company of his daughter, the singer/songwriter Amy Allison. He died on Nov. 15, 2016, at his home in Hilton Head, SC.

— Ken Hunt



John D. Loudermilk

Leon Russell

Session Musician Supreme

Born 1942

Born Claude Russell Bridges in Lawton, OK, on April 2, 1942, he had begun piano tuition at the age of four and took up trumpet in high school. Oklahoma was still a dry state so there was no conflict to him playing in clubs while being underage. Aged 17, he hit the road with Jerry Lee Lewis.

A musician's musician, he gravitated to Los Angeles where he initially found work in clubs and took the name Leon Russell from borrowed ID as he was still underage in California. He developed a reputation as a session musician, by now having added guitar, and played copious sessions as one of the Los Angeles elite.

His playing appeared on records for acts as diverse as Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin, The Monkees, and Frank Sinatra. His piano graced The Byrds' *Mr. Tambourine Man*, Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass's *A Taste of Honey*, and notable Beach Boys hits, including *Pet Sounds*.

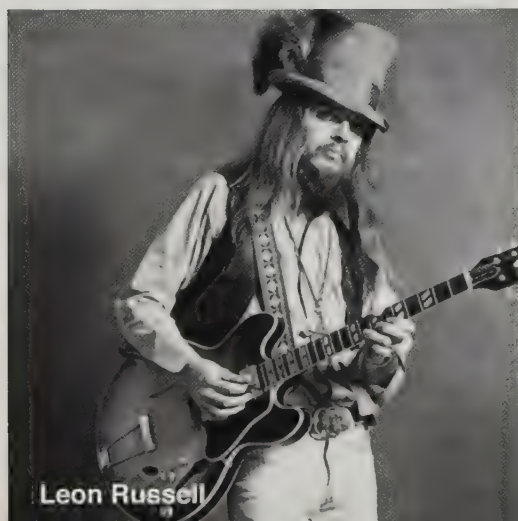
In 1968, he built a home studio in the Hollywood Hills. A period of massive creativity, highlights included his work with Delaney & Bonnie and Friends, and particularly with Joe Cocker on the *Mad Dogs and Englishmen* tour.

With Bonnie Bramlett he co-wrote both *Delta Lady* for Cocker and *Groupie (Superstar)*, though it gained more traction as *Superstar* with Cocker and The Carpenters.

His 1970 solo album, *Leon Russell*, came with a crème de la crème of guests. They included Eric Clapton, George Harrison, Mick Jagger, Ringo Starr, Charlie Watts, Steve Winwood, and Bill Wyman.

Russell re-invented himself numerous times. Examples might be his work with the New Grass Revival, recording under his country alias Hank Wilson, and collaborating with Elton John on the jointly billed *The Union*. He died in his sleep on Nov. 13, 2016, in Mount Juliet, TN.

— Ken Hunt



Philip Chess

Co-owner of Legendary Chess Records

Born 1942

Philip Chess, along with his brother Leonard, created, arguably, the most influential independent record label in the world. Chess Records recorded such indispensable blues musicians as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter, and Willie Dixon and helped form the foundations of rock'n'roll with the release of classic recordings by Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley.

The Chess catalogue would make an exorbitant impact on such bands as The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Cream, Led Zeppelin, Fleetwood Mac... While Leonard Chess died Oct. 16, 1969, Philip Chess passed away at his home in Tucson, AZ, on Oct. 18. He was 95.

Born Fiszal Czyz on March 27, 1921, in Motal, Poland, now in Belarus, his father Yasef immigrated to Chicago in the early 1920s. By 1928 he had saved enough money to send for his wife, two sons, and a daughter. With Americanized names, Fiszal became Philip, Lejzor became Leonard, and Czyz became Chess.

While Philip was drafted into the army at the tail end of the Second World War, Leonard bought a restaurant on the south side of Chicago and converted it into the Macomba Lounge nightclub. Mainly jazz groups and jump blues bands performed there.

When one of the club's performers was asked about recording their music, "My father and my uncle looked at each other and said, 'Why don't we do it?'" Terry Chess, Philip's son, told the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

In 1947, Leonard bought a share of Aristocrat Records. When Philip was discharged from the army, he took over the running of the Macomba, while Leonard delved deeper into the recording business. He began recording blues singers who had moved to Chicago from the South and pressed 3,000 copies of Muddy Waters's single *I Can't Be Satisfied* in 1948. It sold out in a day.

The Macomba burned down in 1950 and

both brothers took over Aristocrat and renamed it Chess Records. The saxophonist Gene Ammons's *My Foolish Heart* was their first release, followed by Muddy Waters's *Walkin' The Blues*, with *Rolling Stone* on the flip side.

Not only did they record their own artists but they also leased masters from the likes of Sam Philips's Sun label in Memphis. He gave them Howlin' Wolf amongst others.

While Waters's first few records were stripped-down affairs, mainly himself and Big Crawford on bass, eventually he would include Little Walter on harmonica and Jimmy Rogers on guitar. With the addition of a drummer, his evolution of electric blues was complete.

While Philip took care of the business end of things, Leonard focused on the studio. He would sign blues giants the likes of Sonny Boy Williamson, John Lee Hooker, Otis Rush, Buddy Guy, Etta James...

At the same time, Chess Records provided the backbone for rock'n'roll through Chuck Berry's releases of *Maybellene*, *Johnny B. Goode* and *Roll Over Beethoven*.

The Chess brothers, though, weren't without their detractors. They were frequently accused of taking financial advantage of their artists. As the *New York Times* noted: "There were lawsuits usually settled confidentially. Some Chess artists said their compensation was more often like an allowance than like a salary."

As the 1960s evolved, numerous young white musicians gravitated towards the Chess blues recordings. And when the Rolling Stones—named after the Waters track—first toured America in 1964, they made a pilgrimage to the Chess studio in Chicago.

A year prior, the brothers bought the Chicago radio station WHFC and renamed it WVON (VON stood for the "voice of the negro"). When Leonard died in 1969, Philip sold Chess Records but he continued to run the station until he retired to Arizona in 1972.

The Chess brothers were inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame in 1995.

— Roddy Campbell

Leonard Cohen: A Personal Tribute

By J. Poet



I remember the moment I became aware of Leonard Cohen. I was visiting a poet friend and, as I looked around his apartment, I saw a poem he'd tacked up on his wall. The title was *Suzanne*. My friend was a good poet, but this poem was transcendent.

"When did you write this," I asked. "It's the best thing you've ever written." My friend shrugged. "It's not mine. It's by Leonard Cohen. I put it up for inspiration."

I read *Suzanne* again, marvelling at the rhymes and images.

Later that day, I went to a bookstore looking for Cohen's poetry. They didn't have any in stock, but they had two novels, *The Favourite Game* and *Beautiful Losers*. *The Favourite Game* was good, a moving coming-of-age story. *Beautiful Losers* was a masterpiece, as much a poem as a novel, dealing with love, loss, and betrayal, full of sex and drugs and Native American history.

For the next few weeks, I took it with me everywhere, driving my friends crazy, demanding they read my favourite passages. "This guy makes records, too," one of my friends said.

I ran to a record store and picked up *Songs Of Leonard Cohen*, *Songs From A Room*, and *Songs Of Love And Hate*. I took them home and didn't listen to anything but Leonard

Cohen for a long time. His voice was soothing and low key, an ordinary voice, but full of compassion, insight, sexuality, and ironic humour.

A few years later, I was a music journalist. Columbia Records called to tell me Leonard Cohen was coming to town; would I like to interview him? A Columbia publicist picked me up and took me to Cohen's hotel room.

Cohen sat down and smiled. He was the first major artist I interviewed face to face. I was intimidated, but he was a gentleman. His self-deprecating humour set me at ease and he was patient with my awkward questions.

In 2001, Columbia flew me to Los Angeles to interview Cohen at his home. He was warm and gracious and remembered our first meeting. He showed me around his house, took me out to his recording studio, and spoke at length about his Zen practice, his creative process, and his relationships.

After the formal interview, he showed me a book of poems and drawings he was working on. He'd just done a sketch called *Happy At Last*, a caricature of his weeping face. When I laughed, he printed a copy for me.

Cohen told me that he took poetry and making music seriously: "I sweat over every word, which is not to say that labouring over them is

any guarantee of excellence." His modesty was genuine, a welcome attitude in a business full of hyperbole and manufactured enthusiasm.

He only made 14 studio albums, but every one of them is a gem. *You Want It Darker*, his most recent record, got rave reviews; some critics suggesting it might be his last one. It's full of regret, anger, and considerations of mortality, weary conversations with past lovers, God, and his darker self, leavened by his mordant wit. With hindsight, it does seem like he was writing his own epitaph, but he did it with his usual charm, the hint of a smirk tugging at the corner of his mouth.

*"Magnified, sanctified, be thy holy name
Vilified, crucified, in the human frame
A million candles burning for the help that
never came
You want it darker... We kill the flame."*

Leonard Cohen

You Want It Darker (Columbia)



Cohen released *Darker* a few months before he passed and it's easy to view it as his conscious goodbye to the world, given the themes of death and regret that fill the album's last two vocal tracks, *It Seemed The Better Way* and *Steer Your Way*.

Both songs conflate imagery from the Old and New Testaments, the first a consideration of Christian themes of faith and salvation, the second a confession and celebration of human frailty. *Steer Your Way* also contains one of Cohen's wittiest jabs, paraphrasing *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* to sing, "As he died to make men holy, let us die to make things cheap..."

Cohen's son, Adam, producer Patrick Leonard and longtime collaborator Sharon Robinson contribute to the melodies, while remaining faithful to Cohen's minimal esthetic, keeping the attention on his lyrics. He doesn't rage against the dying of the light but, as is his wont, comments upon it with a wry smile as he sings, "I don't need a pardon, there's no one left to blame, I'm leaving the table, I'm out of the game."

Darker is one of Cohen's strongest albums, a beautiful epitaph for one of our greatest singers and songwriters.

— By J. Poet

Ian Bell is an accidental Alan Lomax. He is a natural recorder and collector of old songs, who over the course of a productive performing career has amassed a unique private collection of Ontario folk recordings, songbooks, sheet music, broadsides, and photographs. He plays guitar, mandolin, button accordion, and other instruments. He performs traditional songs and writes his own. After 12 years, he has also retired as curator of the Port Dover Harbour Museum, leaving him ready to put his skills toward creating a free-use online resource called the Ontario Traditional Music Library, scheduled to launch Feb. 2, 2017. John Goddard caught up to Bell at his home in Paris, ON.

What is the Ontario Traditional Music Library?

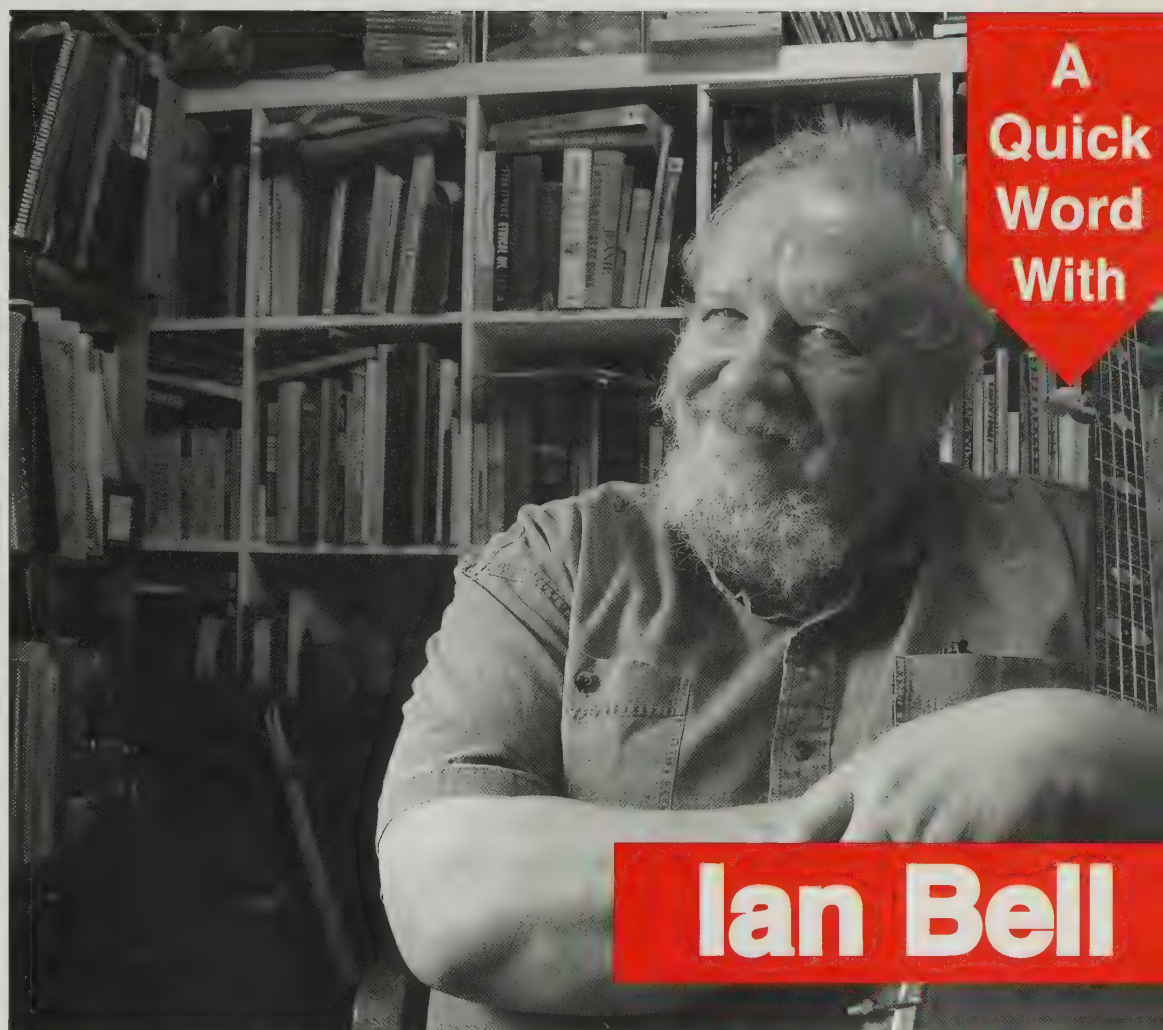
Essentially, I am digitizing the contents of the room we're sitting in right now and some parts of my brain. I've been playing Ontario traditional music and historical music—stuff I learned from live people and stuff I learned from dead people—for, I guess, 40 years at this point. Very often, I play in intimate settings—a small-town church basement, or a museum. You do a song and somebody will come up to you afterwards and say, “Oh, my grandmother used to sing that and, you know what, I think I've got a piece of paper at home that's got her song on it”. People give you old tune books and old manuscripts, and binders full of songs, or a tape recording of Grandpa singing a song at a party in 1961, but a song that he learned in 1915. I've been pretty good at keeping all this stuff.

You've crammed a lot into this room. What are these books?

Those came from a flea market up on the Bruce Peninsula that all seemed to have belonged to the same quadrille band back in the 1880s, with the fiddle part and the second fiddle part and the clarinet part. Here I've got three 19th-century manuscripts. This is part of one from 1800 that belonged to a British military musician. He played fife but he also seems to have played fiddle, and there are almost 1,000 tunes in his book. It's like the Rosetta Stone. Sometimes you find things in there that cross reference to other things.

How do you organize the material?

I've made categories. “Social Life and Love.” “On the Farm and in the Bush.” There's one



called “Politics and Conflict,” with Underground Railway songs from the abolitionist newspaper *Voice Of The Fugitive*, and old political broadsides from the 1837 Rebellion of Upper Canada.

Who is the Music Library for?

Mainly musicians looking for a song or fiddle tune, and museum programmers. Any museum putting together a show on the 1837 Rebellion, or the Temperance Movement, will find music and reference material here.

How will the website work?

I'll show you. Let's go to “Other Music and Dance.” We see a song called *Boring For Oil*, by Square Jim MacDonald. We click on that. We see a little description, which in this case begins with, “Listener discretion advised,” because it's all double entendres and sexual metaphors. It says, “Square Jim MacDonald (1888–1970) was a commercial fisherman in Port Dover. This song was recorded at a party in Port Dover in about 1960.” We get the lyrics, and a bit farther down there is a section called “audio, video, web, external links”. We click on that, and we get a sound file of Square Jim

singing his rude song, and we get a picture of him. I like how one thing leads to the next. I'm finding that links are really easy to do, so I am linking over to things like Smithsonian Folkways, where you can find a lot of Edith Folke's recordings of people like [Ottawa Valley folk singer] O.J. Abbott. I might give my version of a song and then a link so you can click over to the Smithsonian site and hear the original guy sing it.

You are crowd-funding to raise \$3,500—that doesn't sound like much money.

I am asking for the barest minimum to get the platform up and running. I've already done hundreds of hours of work over the last two or three years, and other people are volunteering their time, but I need to pay somebody to design the website. I'm also paying some great musicians—including Anne Lederman, Saskia Tomkins, and Teilhard Frost—to take tunes from some of these old manuscripts and record them. There will also be a widget on the site where people can donate to keep paying for the domain and things.

A mock-up of the site can be found at: <http://ianbellmusic.ca/Ontrad/index.html>

Introducing The Kondi Band



Boima Tucker has roots on both sides of the Black Atlantic. He grew up in Milwaukee, where he began his exploration of U.S. hip-hop, electronica, and dance music; and his father comes from Sierra Leone. Though Boima always felt the tug of the West African heritage, as an artist he wasn't able to integrate it until he went to live in San Francisco.

"I think I was always consuming African culture, but I didn't feel empowered to produce anything and get involved with creating it in a community. Then I discovered a club called Little Baobab, a multicultural melting pot to which all kinds of people came to celebrate the music of wherever they were from, or had lived, or visited. That was really a signal to me that there are young people making new forms of African music, and that's when I started really going hard—deejaying and making remixes of coupé-décalé songs," he says, referring to dance music made by Ivorian immigrants.

Then some 10 years ago, filmmaker Banker White introduced Boima to music from Sierra Leone on a video he'd made. It featured blind kondi (thumb piano) player Sorie Kondi—who identifies so strongly with the instrument that he's taken it for his name.

"I was drawn to his very socially conscious lyrics on songs like *Without Money No Family*, and excited to think this amazing virtuoso was from my heritage country and that I could explore and promote something from there, as until then I'd been working with Congolese, Ivorian, or Nigerian styles and popular musics."

A generation older than Boima, Sorie was born into a rural family in northern Sierra Leone. His blindness prevented him from helping out on the land and he turned to the kondi, becoming a master player. In time Sorie moved to the capital Freetown, where he survived primarily as a street musician until meeting Boima and forming The Kondi Band with him.

Getting the two artists together, however, proved a long and at times arduous process.

"Money, visas, and distance have been the three biggest challenges. It's not been easy, but we haven't had any major disasters. So I think that pacing it has been beneficial. We didn't try to rush and do everything at once. It's been able to develop over years."

At last Boima was able to bring Sorie to the U.S. in 2015 to record the album *Salone*, a savvy combination of raw traditional and polished contemporary sounds. "He stayed at my house. I'd make some skeletons of beats, and ask him to give me the tempo of a song, and I'd construct a simple rhythm he'd play along with—or he'd play the song and I'd add a little snare or something. After that I had to sit back and deconstruct the rhythms he was pulling up—which were not necessarily evident from recordings. It took months sometimes

to really figure out the structure and rhythmic potential of a song, and recreate it for more of a pop-music form."

The Kondi Band did some gigs in the U.K. earlier this year, and performed to acclaim at the recent Womex world music expo in Galicia, Spain, with more shows lined up next year.

Meanwhile, Boima has started a company, International Black, for further Black Atlantic projects. "I want a platform to be able to create or support music that fits my view of how the cultural conversation should be going. It's my take on trying to challenge static notions of blackness in North America and empowering people from communities that are marginalized."

— By Tony Montague





Introducing Soulwood

Based in Quebec's Eastern Townships, Soulwood is a unique trio that serves up traditional Quebecois music with an Appalachian flavour, a strong dose of Celtic influence, hints of old-time, and pinches of both Scandinavian and Cajun music.

The group's name refers to the warmth of wooden instruments, but Cajun triangle and didgeridoo sometimes spice up their melodies. There's also an American folk influence that can be heard in the overall, often-intimate feel. These sources of inspiration are all reflected on Soulwood's recently released *À l'orée du bois*, the group's first album, which was beautifully co-produced by Nicholas Williams and Alex Kehler.

Three musicians are behind the effort. Willy Lemaistre communicates his affinity for Celtic music with his strings, flute and voice. Daniel Haché—whose Acadian parents hail from the Bathurst, NB, area—provides the Cajun flavour and plays the violin, percussion, Jew's harp, and didgeridoo. Alex Kehler, lover of Celtic and Scandinavian music as well as old-time, also plays violin in addition to the Swedish nyckelharpa and the Nordic cittern. Soulwood is a combination of all of these.

"We first met back in 2011," says Alex. "It was at a session in Dunham hosted by Pascal Gemme. I knew Willy and had followed his career. At one point, the three of us found ourselves playing together, and we all realized that something magical had happened. After that, it took us all this time before releasing our first album. As someone once said, 'Worthwhile things take time'."

Currently based in Sherbrooke, Alex grew up in Asheville, NC, in the heart of old-time country, near the Tennessee border. Meanwhile, Daniel spent his youth in Waterloo, and Willy grew up near Sutton, QC.

Have they created an Eastern Townships sound?

"We do have an English-French diversity in the band," replies Alex Kehler. "We're also close to the States. We don't have a typical Eastern Townships sound, but we still have a sense of belonging to this region in terms of traditional music."

The pieces on the album include *Boumbadiboum*, which they collected from Jean-Paul Guimond; a composition from the Eastern Townships entitled *La valse de la Grande Ourse*; and *À la claire fontaine*, a traditional Quebec classic.

Elsewhere on the album, *Les flammes* draws from the Cajun repertoire. The band also covers André Marchand, Chéticamp fiddler Joseph Larade, and takes inspiration from Robbie Burns, Ireland, Swedish polska, and even the Carter Family.

"I often use geography as a guiding thread to describe our trajectory," explains Alex. "The Appalachians begin in the United States, then cross into Quebec and over to Acadia. A very long time ago, when there was only one continent called Pangea, they continued to Scotland and Norway. The Appalachians are the oldest mountain range on Earth."

Thus begins a beautiful musical story.

— By Yves Bernard



Edmonton Folk Music Festival



August, 10-13, 2017



www.edmontonfolkfest.org



Introducing Murder Murder

There were moments in Murder Murder's recent trip to Newfoundland where they felt very out of place.

The indie-folk six-piece have all the makings of a fine bluegrass combo, or possibly a Celtic unit, but they veer off rather drastically when it comes to lyrical subject matter. So, when a club owner asks the group if they know some jigs and reels, things can get a little awkward when they offer up their patented "bloodgrass," hyper-energized variations on murder ballads, instead.

"There have been misunderstandings," admits violinist Geoff McCausland with a laugh. "Maybe they're expecting traditional Irish dance tunes and we have to say that we write our own music. In the end we play dance music anyways, it's just dance music they don't know."

According to McCausland, Murder Murder started out as something of a spur of the moment lark, a way to join forces between songwriters in their home town of Sudbury.

Pulling together a murder ballad theme night, a band was eventually assembled for an anti-Valentine's Day dance that started them on their current path. Taking from bluegrass, outlaw country, a little punk rock attitude, and the Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds album *Murder Ballads*, the band began drawing notice for their energetic live show.

"That Nick Cave album was a big inspiration," McCausland affirms. "We still sometimes play *Stagger Lee* when the night gets late and rowdy. We also like to cover *The Ballad of Robert Moore and Betty Coltrane*, which I think was a b-side. Fusing the songs from that album with bluegrass makes for a weird and wonderful sound."

It's also not for everyone, as McCausland is the first to admit. Traditional bluegrass players, for instance, might be appalled at what the band likes to get up to.

"Yeah, they usually don't like us, though we did meet some traditional players in Dublin when we were over there who liked what we did. We try and stay on our best behaviour regardless."

The concept has held true over two releases, 2013's *Murder Murder Murder* and 2015's *From The Stillhouse*, with aporpos covers by Guy Clark (*The Last Gunfighter Ballad*) and John Prine (*Sweet Revenge*) thrown in for good measure. They actually managed to get some airplay out of the former when Clark died in the spring of 2016 and DJs in the U.K. scrambled for appropriate songs to play.

This worked well for the group, who are trying to establish Europe and the U.K. as a market for the future.

"It's actually tougher to get crowds out paying cover in Canada, and especially tough with six musicians and a sound tech in an old SUV that does 23 litres to 100 km," he says with a chuckle. "When we go across the Atlantic we get paid in euros and pounds, we often have guarantees and places to stay. In some ways it's much more sensible to fly across the Atlantic to tour, which is nuts."

The band has already enjoyed a certain amount of notoriety a few years back with some people for a photo shoot involving the band wearing furs and carrying guns.

"We even got death threats," McCausland says with some bemusement. "There was a blog in Vancouver and a festival that wouldn't let us use the photo with them because they found it offensive. I mean, that's fine; amongst ourselves we knew those furs were second-hand from a box in the attic."

He chuckles.

"Anytime it's art at least we're getting people talking, right? We work at not being so over the top in most of our music videos, though. We try to avoid any gore, or violence, or any of the stuff you might associate with our name. We don't want to pander or take the easy way, or go for shock value. In that particular case, we just thought it would look cool to dress in furs and carry a lot of guns!"

— By Tom Murray



Introducing William Prince



Third time was the charm for William Prince.

After a couple of fumbling and ill-fated attempts at recording albums in his early 20s, the singer/songwriter and Peguis First Nation member finally nailed it down in 2015 when he released his debut album, *Earthly Days*. Despite all of the problems he's encountered down the road to finally getting his project out, he's now absolutely fine with it.

"I'm not so sure that anyone would really be interested in the problems of a 20 or 21-year-old," the baritone singer chuckles into the phone from his home in Manitoba. Prince is enjoying a short respite from the flurry of gig offers he's gotten in the last while.

"I think I definitely needed more seasoning, so in the end it was probably good that none of those records ever came out."

We'll never know, unless Prince decides to release the "treasure chest of demos" that he has squirrelled away somewhere in the house, but likely he's correct. *Earthly Days* is not only a remarkable and self-assured debut by a young talent, it's also a musical map for how Prince would like to record in the future. We can thank his friend, musical idol, and *Earthly Days* producer Scott Nolan for this.

"He really changed everything for me," Prince says. "Scott produced my songs the way that a songwriter would. I was used to banging harder on my guitar to make up for the quiet parts, but Scott helped me to embrace the quietness in music. That's why it came out the way it did."

Prince had been a fan of Nolan's music for some time before the two met at an Idle No More protest. The two hit it off, and Nolan immediately fell for the batch of songs that made up *Earthly Days*, helping Prince tinker with them during the two-week recording process. Prince is quick to praise Nolan for his guidance, and especially his forbearance in over-analyzing how to record the singer.

"He was moved by the songs, and he didn't give into nervousness and over-dubitis," Prince chuckles. "I guess we could have put 14 different things on every track but instead we thought, 'Let's hear the skin and bones of these songs. Let's hear how they work on their own'. We gave the songs room to breathe and that allowed me to relax. All of the moves that Scott, Jamie [Sitar, engineer] and I made together have been great."

So great, in fact, that *Earthly Days* netted him the Aboriginal Artist of the Year award at this year's Western Canadian Music Awards.

"I was blown away," he admits. "I was just excited to play. This is something that gets my foot in the door. I've always just wanted to be known as a great singer/songwriter, and this is an effective first step. Mostly

I'm just happy that this justifies the help I've had from the Peguis First Nation. My home community has been so supportive. My next goal is to hopefully win in one of the other categories."

Now that *Earthly Days* has made its mark, Prince is moving on to another batch of songs, this time inspired by family, friends, and, perhaps most important, his recently becoming a father, a life-changing experience for anyone.

"I've been tailoring a new batch of love songs," he confesses. "To be honest, *Earthly Days* was based on my child's mom, and we're not together anymore. I never thought that would happen. I guess I'm going into new realms and hopefully healing. Maybe this is just part of my path."

"On the other side," he continues thoughtfully, "there have been all of these wonderful things happening, like touring and getting a management deal. People have been getting behind me, and seeing that the work I've done has made me worthwhile to partner up with. I guess there's a bit of a trade off between my personal and professional life."

— By Tom Murray





Introducing Zachary Lucky

Whatever his last name suggests, the rising star over Saskatchewan troubadour Zachary Lucky really reflects a thoughtful vision and long hours on and off the road. It doesn't hurt that he has a genre-crossing sound somewhere between folk and country, but informed by wider influences.

A recent independent release, *Everywhere A Man Can Be*, takes another step in the singer/guitarist's evolving sound with the presence of Aaron Goldstein. The Toronto studio ace signed on to add pedal steel guitar and oversee production with a set of top players. Lucky feels Goldstein's touch brought a deeper layer of colour and nuance without closing the door to exploration.

The studio band included drummer Taylor Knox and pianist Dan Edmonds, with cameos for Rosalyn Dennett's fiddle and Frank (Slocan Ramblers) Evans on banjo, but here's guessing that moody pedal steel is responsible for more country fans taking notice.

"People associate pedal steel first with country music but it's really so versatile," Lucky notes.

Lucky's songs take some new directions too. That yearning feeling is still there, but this time it's more tied to the solitude and surprises of the road and touring experience, as on the opening tune *Lost My Way* or the title cut, reminiscent of early Gordon Lightfoot. One odd song in the mix, *South Carolina Murder Ballad*, reflects the writer's growing interest in British folk traditions, suggesting Lucky has lots of territory to explore still. Either way, his deep, lonesome vocal draws you in.

"Meeting Aaron didn't push me towards more roots-country music but it did open the door, and open a path to exploring my heritage, too. Whatever you call it, I feel what I'm doing now is something that has always been inside of me."

Music may be in his blood. Lucky's grandfather was something of a Canadian country legend, Smilin' Johnny Lucky. He witnessed his grandfather perform but the DNA skipped a generation as his parents didn't make a lot of time for music. When this Saskatoon, SK, native got his first Stratocaster at 10 it was more to emulate the punk, pop, and indie-rock bands that blew through town.

By his late teens, Lucky had played in several rock groups but his instincts were wearing thin.

"I wasn't sure how I was going to do it on my own but I wanted to give it a go."

He credits Jeff Tweedy's solo work, Wilco, and Nick Drake as early influences, and then Townes Van Zandt, but Lucky kept exploring English folk artists, too, such as Bert Jansch and Shirley Collins.

In 2008, he put out the first of several EPs delving into acoustic folk but Lucky really found a direction with the album *Come And Gone* (2010). Quitting his day job, he assembled a backing of fiddle, banjo, and percussion and booked himself into small venues across Canada.

A chance introduction to Goldstein (then in Saskatoon for a day with Daniel Romano) led to the latter's unplanned pedal steel contributions to Lucky's sixth release, *The Ballad Of Losing You* (2013). Building momentum, he played some 250 dates the next year, mostly solo, with sojourns into the U.S.

Touring *Everywhere A Man Can Be* will happen more gradually as the singer is also now playing stay-at-home dad with his first child. But Lucky's future sounds like it's worth betting on.

— By Roger Levesque



ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

AND CRITICS' FAVOURITE NEW DISCOVERIES OF 2016



Albums of the Year for 2016

1. Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Auprès du Poêle* (Independent)
2. Leonard Cohen, *You Want It Darker* (Columbia)
- David Francey, *Empty Train* (Laker Music)
4. Small Glories, *Wondrous Traveler* (Independent)
5. Billy Bragg and Joe Henry, *Shine A Light* (Cooking Vinyl)
- Marie Dunn, *Gathering* (Distant whisper Music)
- What A Beautiful World* (Capitol Records)
7. Yann Falquet & Pascal Gemme, *Princes et habitants* (Independent)
8. Breabach, *Astar* (Independent)
- Blackie and The Rodeo Kings, *Kings and Kings* (F:UM)
- Chris Coole, *The Tumbling River* (Independent)

New Discoveries for 2016

1. Dori Freeman
2. Kaia Kater
3. Cactus Blossoms
- Doolin'
- Ten Strings And A Goat Skin

Past Album of the Year Winners

- 2015: Jayme Stone, *Jayme Stone's Lomax Project* (Borealis)
- 2014: Amelia Curran, *They Promised You Mercy* (Six Shooter)



- 2013: David Francey, *So Say We All*, (Laker Music)
- 2012: Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside Music)
- 2011: Gillian Welch, *The Harrow & the Harvest* (Acony)
- 2010: Lynn Miles, *Fall For Beauty* (True North Records)
- 2009: Jory Nash, *New Blue Day* (Independent)
- 2008: Fred Eaglesmith, *Tinderbox* (A Major Label)
- 2007: Alison Krauss & Robert Plant, *Raising Sand* (Rounder)
- 2006: Bob Dylan, *Modern Times* (Columbia)
- 2005: Lynn Miles, *Love Sweet Love* (True North)
- 2004: David Francey, *The Waking Hour* (Laker Music)
- 2003: David Francey, *Skating Rink* (Laker Music)
- 2002: Harry Manx, *Wise And Otherwise* (NorthernBluest)
- 2001: David Francey, *Far End of Summer* (Laker Music)

Past New Discovery Winners

- 2015: Anna and Elizabeth
- 2014: Còiğ
- 2013: Milk Carton Kids
- 2012: Cold Specks
- 2011: The Barr Brothers, Carrie Elkin, Pokey LaFarge, New Country Rehab
- 2010: The Once
- 2009: Kate Reid
- 2008: Amelia Curran
- 2007: Little Miss Higgins, Seth Lakeman, Catherine MacLellan
- 2006: Crooked Still
- 2005: Ridley Bent, House of Doc
- 2004: Fiamma Fumana
- 2003: Rae Spoon
- 2002: Ruthie Foster, Kathleen Edwards
- 2001: Harry Manx

Ten Strings And A Goat Skin make history. The trio from Prince Edward Island become the first band ever to win our annual Album of the Year poll. Their second release, *Auprès Du Poêle* (Around The Woodstove), certainly captivated our reviewer, Tim Readman: “Words can’t really explain how good they sound, you’ll have to listen for yourself. Get a copy, turn it up, and these boys will do the rest.”

Auprès Du Poêle draws its inspiration from traditional Acadian, French, and Irish fiddle tunes, which are seamlessly intertwined with their own splendid, original compositions. Toss in various songs sung in French and English, including fine interpretations of Kay Sutcliffe’s *Coal Not Dole* and its companion piece, the traditional *When First I Came To Caledonia*, and it all adds up to a disc that, obviously, captivated our jurors.

Almost 40 music journalists, radio hosts, folk club, and folk festival personnel from across the country took part in this latest poll. Jurors were asked to list their top 10 recordings released in 2016 and their three favourite new discoveries. Every nomination received one point. The winner gathered the most.

Top honours in the New Discovery category went to Dori Freeman, largely on the strength of her exceptional, self-titled debut for Free Dirt Records. Produced by Richard Thompson’s son, Teddy, it’s a recording that reiterates her stylish singing that flits between classic country and her old-time, Appalachian mountain roots.

A huge thanks to all who kindly participated. In the following pages, you can see how the judges voted, then go and discover all this wonderful music for yourself.

— Roddy Campbell

Mike Barker: Artistic director, Folk Under The Clock: Breabach, *Astar* (Independent); Lennie Gallant, *Searching For Abegweit* (Independent); Martyn Joseph, *Sanctuary* (Pipe Records); Sam Lee & Friends, *The Fade In Time* (The Nest Collective Records); Cheikh Lo, *Balbalou* (Chapter Two/Wagram Music); Van Morrison, *Keep Me Singing* (Exile Productions Ltd); Rura, *Despite The Dark* (Independent); Songs of Separation, *Songs of Separation* (Navigator Records); Sultans of String with Anwar Khurshid, *Subcontinental Drift* (Independent); Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Auprès Du Poêle* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Aziza Brahim, *Dardanelles*, Habadekuk

Yves Bernard: Journalist, *Le Devoir*: Constantinople & Ablaye Cissoko, *Jardins migrants* (Space); Yann Falquet & Pascal Gemme, *Princes et habitants* (Independent); Tomas Jensen, *Retour* (L-abe); Poirier, *Migrations* (Nice Up! Records); Samito, *Samito* (Costume Records); Sussex, *Parade Day* (Independent); Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Auprès Du Poêle* (Independent); Trio Nomad’s Land, *Trio Nomad’s Land* (Malasartes); Vox Sambou, *The Brasil Session* (Ndjam); Just Wôan, *A Second Chance* (Productions Miss-Meuré)

New Discoveries: King Abid, Thomas Carbou & Patrick Graham, *Jazzamboka*

Allison Brock: Host, *Widecut Country*, CKUA Radio Network; artistic director, *Wide Cut Weekend*: Blackie And The Rodeo Kings, *Kings And Kings* (File Under: Music); Billy Bragg & Joe Henry, *Shine A Light*; *Field Recordings From The Great American Railroad* (Cooking Vinyl); Cactus Blossoms, *You’re Dreaming* (Red House); Carter Felker, *Everyday Life* (Independent); Shawn Colvin & Steve Earle, *Colvin & Earle* (Fantasy); Hayes Carll, *Lovers And Leavers* (Highway 87); Dori Freeman, *Dori Freeman* (Free Dirt); Scott No-

lan, *Silverhill* (Transistor 66); Matt Patershuk, *I Was So Fond Of You* (Black Hen); Western Centuries, *Weight Of The World* (Free Dirt)

New Discoveries: Cactus Blossoms, Carter Felker, Dori Freeman

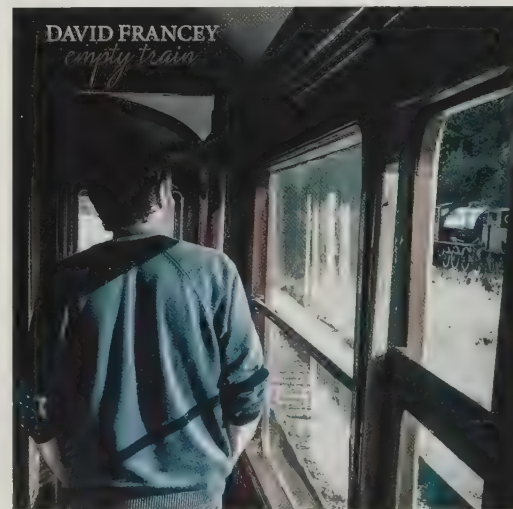
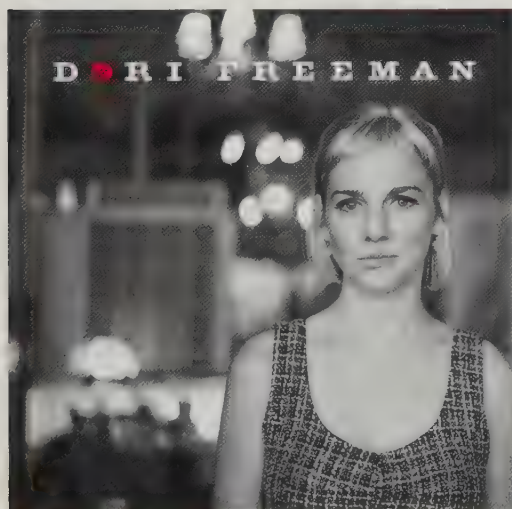
Roddy Campbell: Editor and publisher, *Penguin Eggs*: 100 Mile House, *Hireath* (Independent); The Cat Empire, *Rising With The Sun* (Two Shoes Records); Chris Coole, *The Tumbling River* (Independent); Maria Dunn, *Gathering* (Independent); Yann Falquet & Pascal Gemme, *Princes et habitants* (Independent); Laurie Lewis & The Right Hands, *The Hazel and Alice Sessions* (Hearth Music); Mandolin Orange, *Blindfaller* (Yep Roc); Lakou Mizik, *Wa Di Yo* (Cumbancha); Kaela Rowan, *The Fruited Thorn* (Shoogle Records); The Westies, *Six On The Road* (Pauper Sky Records)

New Discoveries: The Cactus Blossoms, Hubby Jenkins, Twin Bandit

Lark Clark: Host/producer, *World Spinning*, CKUA Radio Network: Alsarrah & The Nubatones, *Manara* (Wonderwheel); Imarhan, *Imarhan* (City Slang); Alkibar Junior, *Jamal* (Studio Mali); Seth Lakeman, *Ballads Of The Broken Few* (Cooking Vinyl); Leyla McCalla, *A Day For The Hunter, A Day For The Prey* (Jazz Village); Danny Michel, *Matadora* (Six Shooter); Farnaz Ohadi, *Bird Dance* (Independent); The Sachal Ensemble, *Song Of Lahore* (Universal); Eva Salina, *Lema Lema* (Independent); Mohsin Zaman, *Fly Home* (Independent)

New Discoveries: The Kruger Brothers, Gordie MacKeeman, Eva Salina

Tanya Corbin: Communications manager, Edmonton Folk Music Festival: Sam Beam & Jesca Hoop, *Love Letter For Fire* (SubPop); Billy Bragg & Joe Henry, *Shine A Light* (Cooking Vinyl); Kacy & Clayton, *Strange Country* (Big White Cloud); Kaia Kater, *Nine Pin*



(Mavens Music); Parker Millsap, *The Very Last Day* (Okrahoma Records); Mumford & Sons, *Johannesburg* (Island); The Once, *We Win Some We Lose* (Independent); The Pines, *Above The Prairie* (Red House); Kate Rusby, *Life In A Paper Boat* (Pure Records); The Small Glories, *Wondrous Traveler* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Kacy & Clayton, Kaia Kater, The Pines

Tom Coxworth: Host/producer, *Folk Routes*, CKUA Radio Network: The Birds of Chicago, *Real Midnight* (Outside Music); Billy Bragg & Joe Henry, *Shine A Light: Field Recordings From The Great American Railway* (Sony); Case/Lang/Vier, *Case/Lang/Vier* (Anti-); Maria Dunn, *Gathering* (Independent); The Eastpointers, *Secret Victory* (Fontana North); 100 Mile House, *Hiraeth* (Independent); Passenger, *Young As The Morning Old As The Sea* (Sony Music); Poor Nameless Boy, *Bravery* (Chronograph Records); Small Glories, *Wondrous Traveler* (Independent); Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Auprès Du Poêle* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Dori Freeman, The Pines, Ryley Walker

Ian Davies: Artistic director, Cuckoo's Nest Folk Club: Bellowhead, *Live – The Farewell Tour* (Navigator); Breabach, *Astar* (Independent); Brother Sun, *Weights & Wings* (Independent); Shawn Colvin & Steve Earle, *Colvin & Earle* (Fantasy); Cupola:Ward, *Bluebell* (Betty Beetroot Records); East Pointers, *Secret Victory* (Independent); The Gloaming, 2 (Real World); Christy Moore, *Lily* (Columbia); John Renbourn & Wizz Jones, *Joint Control* (Riverboat); Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Auprès Du Poêle* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Doolin', Dustbowl Revival, Jullie Hjetland

Andy Donnelly: Producer/host, *The Celtic*

Show, CKUA Radio Network: Connla, *River Waiting* (Connlamusic.com); Chris De Burgh, *A Better World* (Starwatch Entertainment); Doolin', *Doolin'* (Compass); Maria Dunn, *Gathering* (Distant Whisper); Seth Lakeman, *Ballads Of The Broken Few* (Cooking Vinyl); Oysterband, *This House Will Stand* (Running Man); Runrig, *The Story* (Chrysalis); Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Auprès Du Poêle* (Independent); Trail West, *Rescattered Mastered* (Tyree Records); Whalebone, *Mirabilia* (Two Wild Women)

New Discoveries: Birds of Chicago, East Pointers, Ten Strings And A Goat Skin

Michael Dunn: Contributor, *Penguin Eggs*: Leonard Cohen, *You Want It Darker* (Columbia); The Andrew Collins Trio, *And It Was Good* (Independent); Drive By Truckers, *American Band* (ATO Records); Shuyler Jansen, *The Long Shadow* (Big White Cloud Records); The Jayhawks, *Paging Mr. Proust* (Thirty Tigers); Kacy & Clayton, *Strange Country* (Big White Cloud Records/New West Records); Scott Nolan, *Silverhill* (Transistor 66); Petunia & The Vipers, *Dead Bird On The Highway* (Independent); Margo Price, *Midwest Farmer's Daughter* (Third Man Records); Sturgill Simpson, *A Sailor's Guide To Earth* (RJ Records)

New Discoveries: Carter Felker, Richard Inman, Swear By The Moon

Steve Edge: Artistic director, Rogue Folk Club, host of *The Edge On Folk*, CiTR FM: The Bills, *Trail Of Tales* (Independent); Birds Of Chicago, *Real Midnight* (Independent); Cassie & Maggie, *The Willow Collection* (Independent); Doolin', *Doolin'* (Compass); Lakou Mizik, *Wa Di Yo* (Cumbancha); Aoife O'Donovan, *In The Magic Hour* (Yeproc); Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Auprès Du Poêle* (Independent); Djelimady Tounkara, *Djely Blues* (Label Bleu); Wake The Dead, *Deal* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Barrule, Dreamers Circus,

Nathaniel Rateliff & The Nightsweats

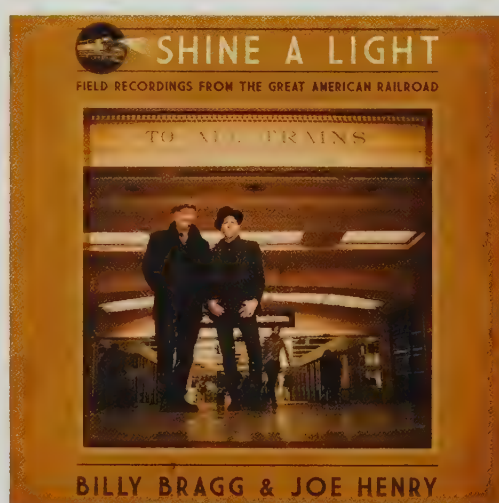
Doug Gallant: Music journalist, *Penguin Eggs* contributor, co-creator of three musicals: The East Pointers, *Secret Victory* (Independent); Yann Falquet & Pascal Gemme, *Princes et habitants* (Independent); David Francey, *Empty Train* (Laker Music); Kaia Kater, *Nine Pin* (Kingswood Records); Amanda Rheaume, *Holding Patterns* (Independent); The Slocan Ramblers, *Coffee Creek* (Independent); The Small Glories, *Wondrous Traveler* (Independent); Thom Swift, *The Legend Of Roy Black* (Independent); Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Auprès Du Poêle* (Independent); Union Duke, *Golden Days* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Evening Hymns, Kaia Kater, The Small Glories

Brian Gladstone: Artistic director, Winterfolk Blues and Roots Festival: Matt Andersen, *Honest Man* (True North); Joan Baez, *75th Birthday Celebration* (Razor & Tie); The Bombadils, *New Shoes* (Borealis); Leonard Cohen, *You Want It Darker* (Sony); James Gordon, *Sunny Jim* (Borealis); Harpin' Norm Lucien, *World's Strongest Man* (Independent); Big Dave McLean, *Better The Devil You Know* (Black Hen); James Taylor, *Before This World* (Concord); Ken Whiteley, *Freedom Blues* (Borealis); Noah Zacharin, *Strange Rider* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Isaak Bonk, Suzanne Jarvie, Melanie Peterson

Barry Hammond: Freelance reviewer: Eric Bibb, *The Happiest Man In The World* (Warner); Chatham County Line, *Autumn* (Outside); The Devil Makes 3, *Redemption & Ruin* (New West); Robbie Fulks, *Upland Stories* (Bloodshot); Norah Jones, *Day Breaks* (Universal); Del McCoury & David Grisman, *Del & Dawg* (eOne Music); Van Morrison, *Keep Me Singing* (Universal); Madeleine Peyroux, *Secular*



Hymns (Universal); James Hunter Six, *Hold On!* (Outside); Allen Toussaint, *American Tunes* (Warner)

New Discoveries: The Cactus Blossoms, Rhiannon Giddens, *Hope In High Water*

Sean Hayes: Artistic director, Irish Cultural Society, Calgary: The Cat Empire, *Rising With The Sun* (Two Shoes); Chance the Rapper, *Colouring Book* (Apple Music); Leonard Cohen, *You Want It Darker* (Columbia); Cathal Hayden, *Hooked On Banjo* (Claddagh); Lumineers, *Cleopatra* (Dualtone, Dine Alone); James Vincent McMorrow, *We Move* (Apple Music); Passenger, *Young As The Morning, Old As The Sea* (Black Crow); The Pines, *Above The Prairie* (Red House); A Tribe Called Quest, *We Got It From Here, Thank You 4 Your Service* (Epic); Lucinda Williams, *The Ghosts of Highway 20* (Highway 20)

New Discoveries: The Cat Empire, Jarryd James, Lawrence Taylor

Glen Herbert: Writer/editor, Burlington, ON: Courtney Marie Andrews, *Honest Life* (Mama Bird Recording Co.); Balsam Range, *Mountain Voodoo* (Mountain Home Music); Chris Coole, *The Tumbling River* (Independent); Dori Freeman, *Dori Freeman* (Free Dirt); Martin Harley & Daniel Kimbro, *Live At Southern Ground* (Del Mundo); Kaia Kater, *Nine Pin* (Independent); Jim Kweskin & Geoff Muldaur, *Penny's Farm* (Kingswood); Arnie Naiman, *My Lucky Stars* (Independent); Karnnel Sawitsky & Daniel Koulack, *Fiddle & Banjo: Tunes From The North, Songs From The South* (Independent); Eli West, *The Both* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Courtney Marie Andrews, Dori Freeman, Karnnel Sawitsky & Daniel Koulack

Patrick Langston: Music contributor, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Penguin Eggs*, others: Matt An-

derson, *Honest Man* (True North); Billy Bragg and Joe Henry, *Shine A Light* (Cooking Vinyl); Leonard Cohen, *You Want It Darker* (Columbia); Drive By Truckers, *American Band* (ATO); David Francey, *Empty Train* (IDLA); Shovels & Rope, *Little Seeds* (New West); The Strumbellas, *Hope* (Glassnote); Chaim Tannenbaum, *Chaim Tannenbaum* (StonySound); Lucinda Williams, *The Ghosts Of Highway 20* (Highway 20); Lori Yates, *Sweetheart Of The Valley* (CD Baby)

New Discoveries: Coco Love Alcorn, Shovels & Rope, The Slocan Ramblers

Roger Levesque: Writer/broadcaster, *Edmonton Journal*, *Penguin Eggs*: Eric Bibb & North Country Far with Danny Thompson, *The Happiest Man In The World* (Stony Plain); Billy Bragg & Joe Henry, *Shine A Light* (Cooking Vinyl); Elage Diouf, *Melokaane* (Independent); Joe Driscoll & Sekou Kouyate, *Monistic Theory* (Cumbancha); Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters, *Maxwell Street* (Stony Plain); Stephen Fearing, *Every Soul's A Sailor* (Lowden Proud); Front Porch Roots Revue, *Sugar Cube* (Independent); Big Dave McLean, *The Devil You Know* (Black Hen); Tanya Tagaq, *Retribution* (Six Shooter); Turkwaz, *Nazar* (Independent)

New Discoveries: John Guliak, Mississippi Heat, Jarekus Singleton

South Country Fair (Jana Mackenzie, Gillian Moranz, Maureen Chambers): C.R. Avery, *All The Angels Didn't Scare Me* (Independent); Leonard Cohen, *You Want It Darker* (Columbia); Gord Downie, *Secret Path* (Arts & Crafts); The Jerry Cans, *InuusiQ/Life* (Pheromone); Lake Street Dive, *Side Pony* (Nonesuch); Ryland Moranz, *Hello New Old World* (RebelTone); Petunia & The Vipers, *Dead Bird On The Highway* (Independent); David Simard, *The Heavy Wait* (Sainte Cecile); John Southworth, *Small Town Water Tower*

(Tin Angel); Skye Wallace, *Something Wicked* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Beppe Gambetta, Llwybr Llaethog, Adam Palma

Jim Marino: Host, *Freewheeling Spotlight Show*, *Freewheeling Folk Show*, *Smokin' Bluegrass Show*, 93.3 CFMU: 100 Mile House, *Hiraeth* (Independent); Trevor Alguire, *Perish In The Light* (Independent); Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, *Kings and Kings* (FU:M); Lorne Clarke, *From My Window* (Independent); Maria Dunn, *Gathering* (Distant Whisper); David Francey, *Empty Train* (Laker Music); Amanda Rheaume, *Holding Patterns* (Independent); Scott Shea, *Pendulum* (Independent); Spinney Brothers, *Living The Dream* (Mountain Fever); Caroline Wiles, *Lovers Lane* (Independent)

New Discoveries: The Redhill Valleys, Benjamin Dakota Rogers, Ken Yates

Bruce Mason: Freelance writer: The Bombadils, *New Shoes* (Borealis); Leonard Cohen, *You Want It Darker* (Columbia, Sony); Jim Kweskin & Geoff Muldaur, *Penny's Farm* (Kingswood); Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris, Linda Ronstadt, *The Complete Trio Collection* (Rhino); John Prine, *For Better, Or Worse* (Oh Boy); Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Auprès Du Poêle* (Independent); Tanya Tagaq, *Retribution* (Six Shooter); Time Jumpers, *Kid Sister* (Rounder); Various artists, *The Life & Songs Of Emmylou Harris* (Rounder); Dwight Yoakam, *Swimmin' Pools*, *Movie Stars* (Warner Brothers)

New Discoveries: Buckman Coe, Doolin', The Kerplunks

Brad McEwen: Artistic director, Mill Race Folk Society, Cambridge, ON: Trio Chorinho, *Chora Brazil* (Independent); Chris Coole, *The Tumbling River* (Independent); Alex Cumming & Nicola Beazley, *Across The Water* (Independent); Cupola: Ward, *Bluebell* (Independent);



Yann Falquet & Pascal Gemme, *Princes et habitants* (Independent); Anne Lederman, *Old Man's Table* (Independent); The LightofEast Ensemble, *Live At The Aeolian* (Independent); NUA, *Flow* (Independent); Teyr, *Far From The Tree* (Independent); Turkwaz, *Nazar* (Independent)

New Discoveries: The Boxcar Boys, The Foxglove Trio, Trio Dhoore

Monica Miller: Host/producer, *How I Hear It, Mixtape*, CKUA Radio Network; Coco Love Alcorn, *Wonderland* (Independent); Sam Beam & Jesca Hoop, *Love Letter For Fire* (Sub Pop); Leonard Cohen, *You Want It Darker* (Sony); Jason Collett, *Song And Dance Man* (Arts & Crafts); Erin Costelo, *Down Below, The Status Quo* (Venue); Margaret Glaspy, *Emotions and Math* (Cadence); Danny Michel, *Matadora* (Six Shooter); Andy Shauf, *The Party* (Arts & Crafts); Son of Dave, *...Plays Thirteen Explosive Hits By Other People* (Independent); Mavis Staples, *Livin' On A High Note* (Anti-)

New Discoveries: Arvvas, Mariya May, Lakou Mizik

Tony Montague: Music journalist, *Penguin Eggs*, *fRoots*: 9Bach, *Anian* (Real World); Eli-da Almeida, *Ora Doci Ora Margos* (Lusafrica); Aurelio, *Darandi* (Stonetree); Yann Falquet & Pascal Gemme, *Princes et habitants* (Independent); Fru Skagerrak, *Fru Skagerrak* (GO'Danish Folk Music); Ialma, *Camino* (Independent); Kobo Town, *Where The Galleon Sank* (Stonetree); Lakou Mizik, *Wa Di Yo* (Cumbancha); NUA, *Flow* (Independent); Davide Salvado, *Lobos* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Lakou Mizik, NUA, Davide Salvado

Peter North: Host, *Dead Ends and Detours*, CKUA Radio Network; artistic director, Salmon Arm Roots & Blues: Blue Highway, *Original Traditional* (Rounder); Claire Lynch,

North By South (Compass); Yo-Yo Ma/Silk Road Ensemble, *Sing Me Home* (Sony); John McEuen, *Made In New York* (Chesky); New Orleans Suspects, *Kaleidoscoped* (Independent); O'Connor Band w/ Mark O'Connor, *Coming Home* (Rounder); Darrell Scott, *Couchville Sessions* (Full Light); The Unseen Strangers, *Stranger Places* (Independent); Various artists, *God Don't Never Change (The Songs of Blind Willie Johnson)* (Alligator); Bob Weir, *Blue Mountain* (Columbia)

New Discoveries: Martin Harley, Lonesome Ace Stringband, Three Cane Whale

John Prentice: Host/producer, *Planet Mainstage* (101.5 UMFM); Guy Davis, *Kokomo Kid* (M.C.); Cecile Doo Kingue, *Anybody Listening Part 2-Dialogues* (Independent); Fanfare Ciocarlia, *Onward To Mars* (Asphalt Tango); David Francey, *Empty Train* (Laker); Daniel Koulack, *Frailing To Succeed* (Custom); Danny Michel, *Matadora* (Six Shooter); William Prince, *Earthly Days* (Independent); Rosie & the Riveters, *Good Clean Fun* (Independent); Kate Rusby, *Life In A Paper Boat* (Pure); The Small Glories, *Wondrous Traveler* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Dan Frechette & Laurel Thomson, Kaia Kater, The Young Novelists

Tim Readman: Musician, producer and freelance journalist: 9Bach, *Anian* (Real World); Breabach, *Astar* (Breabach); Coig, *Carols* (Independent); Hamish Napier, *The River* (Strashspey); Martin Newell with The Hosepipe Band, *The Song of the Waterlily & Black Shuck* (Independent); Niamh Parsons & Graham Dunn, *Kind Providence* (Independent); Shooglenifty, *The Untied Knot* (Shoogle); Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Auprès Du Poêle* (Independent); Lucinda Williams, *The Ghosts of Highway 20* (Highway 20); Various artists, *The Joy Of Living - A Tribute to Ewan MacColl* (Cooking Vinyl)

New Discoveries: 9Bach, Barrule, Ten Strings And A Goat Skin

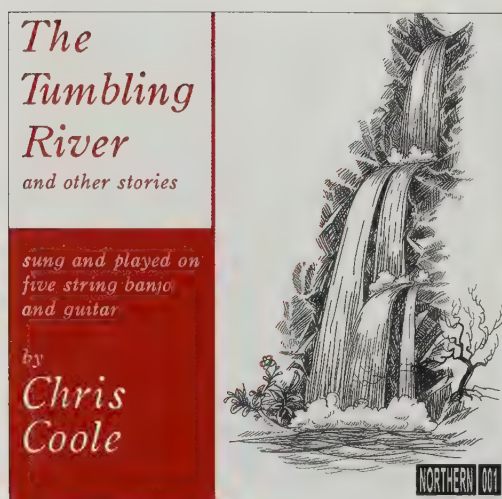
Mike Regenstreif: Journalist, blogger, broadcaster: Eric Bibb & North Country Fair with Danny Thompson, *The Happiest Man In The World* (Stony Plain); Leonard Cohen, *You Want It Darker* (Columbia); Maria Dunn, *Gatherings* (Distant Whisper); David Francey, *Empty Train* (Laker); Jim Kweskin & Geoff Muldaur, *Penny's Farm* (Kingswood); Leyla McCalla, *A Day for the Hunter, A Day for the Prey* (Jazz Village); Del McCoury, *Del & Woody* (McCoury Music); Corin Raymond, *Hobo Jungle Fever Dreams* (Local Rascal); Tom Russell, *The Tom Russell Anthology 2: Gunpowder Sunsets* (Frontera); Jenny Whiteley, *The Original Jenny Whiteley* (Black Hen)

New Discoveries: Coco Love Alcorn, The Bombadils, Kaia Kater

Bob Remington: Journalist, author, musician: Matt Anderson, *Honest Man* (True North); Hayes Carll, *Lovers and Leavers* (Hwy 87); Andrew Collins Trio, *And It Was Good* (Independent); Chris Coole, *The Tumbling River* (Independent); Earls of Leicester, *Rattle & Roar* (Rounder); David Francey, *Empty Train* (Independent); Bruce Molsky, *Molsky's Mountain Drifters* (Tree Frog); John Reischman, Scott Nygaard, Sharon Gilchrist, *The Harmonic Tone Revealers* (Corvus); Jeff Scroggins & Colorado, *Ramblin' Feels Good* (Independent); The Small Glories, *Wondrous Traveler* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Eva Foote, Kristine Schmitt, Kaitlyn Raitz & Ben Plotnick

Mike Sadava: Freelance journalist: Bumper Jackson, *Too Big World* (Independent); John Cleary, *Go Go Juice* (FHQ Records); Martin Harley and John Kimbro, *Southern Ground* (Del Mundo Records); Ivas John, *Good Days a Comin'* (Right Side Up Records); July Talk,



Touch (Sleepless Records); Cluny MacPherson, *Country Squall* (Independent); The New Orleans Suspects, *Kaleidoscoped* (Independent); Petunia And The Vipers, *Inside of You* (Independent); Western Flyers, *Wild Blue Yonder* (Versatone Records); Billie Zizi, *Moon of Honey* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Vincent Cross, Red Tail Wing, Mike Eldred

Alice Sellwood: General manager, Toronto Blues Society; Blue Moon Marquee, *Gypsy Blues* (Independent); Paul DesLauriers Band, *Relentless* (Big Toe); Cecile Doo-Kingue, *Anybody Listening Part 2: Dialogues* (Independent); Angel Forrest, *Angel's 11* (Black Hen); Spencer MacKenzie, *Infected With The Blues* (Independent); Sean Pinchin, *Monkey Brain* (Independent); Paul Reddick, *Ride The One* (Stony Plain); Turbo Street Funk, *Momentum* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Blues Moon Marquee, The Fox & The Moon, Spencer MacKenzie

Iles siemieniuk: *Penguin Eggs* contributor, CJSW Radio host: Paul Bergman, *Anthropology* (Independent); Ryan Boldt, *Broadside Ballads* (Big White Cloud); Leonard Cohen, *You Want It Darker* (Sony); David Francey, *Empty Train* (Laker); Kacy & Clayton, *Strange Music* (Independent); The Pines, *Above The Prairie* (Red House); Darryl Purpose, *Still The Birds* (Blue Rock); Corin Raymond, *Hobo Jungle Fever Dreams* (Local Rascal); Darrell Scott, *Couchville Sessions* (Full Light); Show of Hands, *The Long Way Home* (Hands On)

New Discoveries: Paul Bergman, Ryland Moranz, Poor Nameless Boy

Lyle Skinner: Host, *Prairie Ceilidh*, CKJS Radio 810, and *Waxies Dargle* CJUM/UMFM 101.5: Bellowhead, *Live—The Farewell Tour* (Navigator); Beoga, *Before We Change Our Mind* (Independent); Breabach, *Astar* (Inde-

pendent); Cara, *Yet We Sing* (Artes); Heather Rankin, *A Fine Line* (Maple Music); Kate Rusby, *Life In A Paper Boat* (Pure); Aoife Scott, *Carry The Day* (Independent); Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Auprès Du Poêle* (Independent); Various artists, *The Ultimate Guide To English Folk* (ARC); We Banjo 3, *String Theory* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Connla, Cuig, Doolin'

Eric Thom: Music writer, Toronto: Sugar Brown, *Poor Lazarus* (Independent); Joanna Connor, *Six String Stories* (M.C.); Mike Farley Band, *Where We Stand* (Independent); Dori Freeman, *Dori Freeman* (Free Dirt); Claire Lynch, *North By South* (Compass); Mr. Rick, *Sings About Booze + God* (Independent); Michael Juan Nunez, *Rise* (Independent); Waiting For Henry, *Town Called Patience* (Mighty Hudson); Tim Williams, *So Low* (Independent); Stephen Young & The Union, *Eagle Fort Rumble* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Belle Plaine, Mike Farley Band, Dori Freeman

Greg Torrington: Country and roots channels programmer, Stingray Music: Birds of Chicago, *Real Midnight* (Five Head); Billy Bragg & Joe Henry, *Shine A Light* (Cooking Vinyl); Mark Erelli, *For A Song* (Independent); David Francey, *Empty Train* (Laker); Sarah Jarosz, *Undercurrent* (Sugar Hill/Concord); Lori McKenna, *The Bird & The Rifle* (CN/Thirty Tigers); Aoife O'Donovan, *In The Magic Hour* (Yep-Roc); Quiles & Cloud, *Beyond the Rain* (Slow Hunt/Compass); The Small Glories, *Wondrous Traveler* (Independent); The Stray

Birds, *Magic Fire* (Yep-Roc)

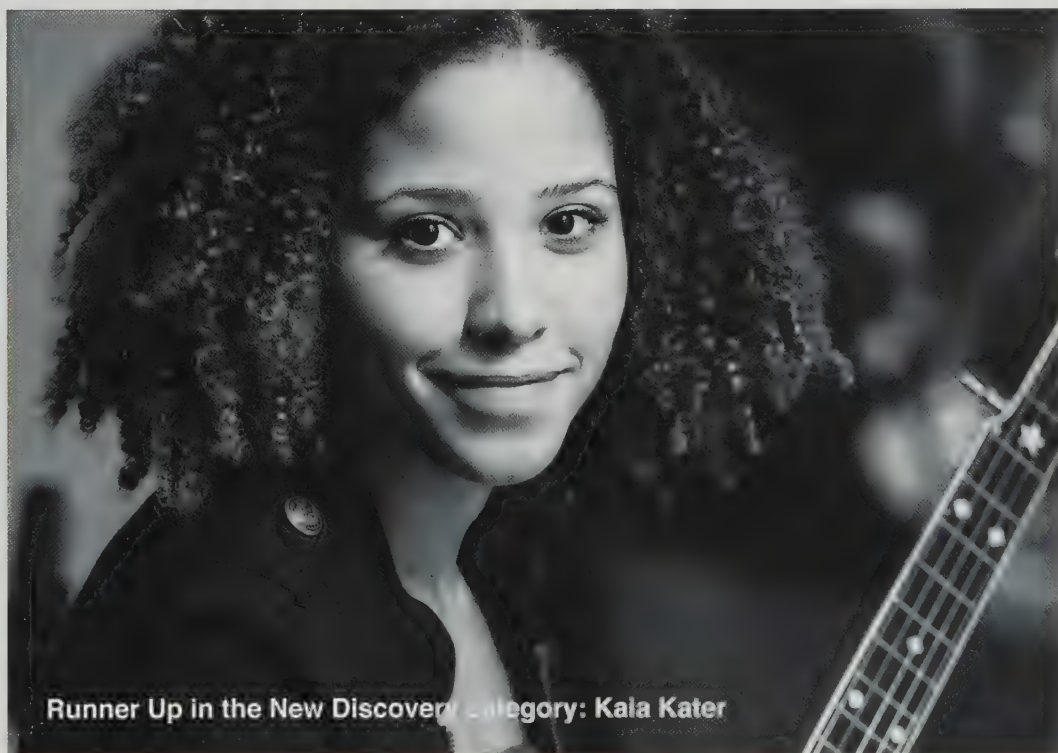
New Discoveries: Dori Freeman, Margo Price, Anna Tivel

Jan Vanderhorst: Host, *Just Us Folk*, AM 1380 CKPC, Brantford, ON: Matt Andersen, *Honest Man* (True North); Bentall Taylor Ulrich, *Tightrope Walk* (Borealis); Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, *Kings And Kings* (FU:M); Mary Chapin Carpenter, *The Things That We Are Made Of* (Lambent Light); David Francey, *Empty Train* (Laker); Claire Lynch, *North By South* (Compass); David Mallett, *Celebration* (North Road); Benjamin Dakota Rogers, *Whisky And Pine* (Independent); The Small Glories, *Wondrous Traveler* (Independent); Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, *Apres Du Poelle* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Maneli Jamal, The Outside Track, Ten Strings And A Goat Skin

Michael (A Man Called) Wrycraft: Album designer, festival emcee, concert curator: Banjo Mechanics, *JLP* (Independent); Blackie And The Rodeo Kings, *Kings And Kings* (FU:M); Alysha Brilla, *In My Head* (Sunny Jam); Joanna Chapman-Smith, *Elon And The City Of Stone* (Independent); Communism, *Get Down Get Together* (Independent); Harrow Fair, *Call To Arms* (Roaring Girl); Roxanne Potvin, *For Dreaming* (Independent); Emilyn Stam & John David Williams, *Emilyn Stam & John David Williams* (Independent); Julian Taylor, *Desert Star* (Independent); Turkwaz, *Nazar* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Tafari Anthony, Bobby Dove, Ginger Ale & The Monowhales





This trio lace their fresh take on Celtic tunes with jazz and the odd bit of studio wizardry.

By Tony Montague

NUA in Gaelic means new, and for Toronto-based NUA it stands for the trio's approach to creating adventurous and contemporary Celtic tunes inspired by tradition. It's the fruit of a close friendship between fiddler James Law, guitarist Graeme McGillivray, and bodhrán player Jacob McCauley, who with *Bold* (2013) and *Flow* (2016) have delivered two of the finest Canadian Celtic roots albums of recent years, each one bursting with fresh and exciting ideas, magnifying the sonic scope of Scottish and Irish music.

Though the trio came together five years ago, Law and McGillivray have been making

music for much longer. "They started fiddle lessons together aged three in Robert's Creek, BC, where they grew up," says Jacob. "James's parents are both originally from Scotland, and ran a music camp for many years on the Sunshine Coast. Graeme is more towards the Irish side but has Scottish, too. I'm from Toronto and have just the Irish blood, and was playing drum in the family band with my mum since I was five."

Two bands stand out as influences and inspirations for NUA—folk power-trio Lau, based in Scotland, and the recently reformed Flook, based in England and Ireland. Both are pioneering progressive Celtic bands who make traditional music the foundation for rich, composite works that defy easy tags or regular time signatures.

"I was knocked out by the synergy between [Flook's] bodhrán-player John Joe Kelly and guitarist Ed Boyd," says Jacob. "I'd never heard anything so well-thought-out and tight

between two rhythm players. I wanted NUA to be that tight. As for Lau, I remember hearing their first album *Lightweights and Gentlemen* [2007] and thinking how cool their compositions were. Aidan O'Rourke definitely has a strong effect on James as a fiddler with his smooth, clean, and precise playing."

In 2010, James and Graeme moved to Toronto to attend music college, where both learned to play jazz—another important ingredient in NUA's compositional cauldron.

"James studied drums as he felt he'd done so much fiddle, and it gives him good insight into the percussion aspect of NUA," says Jacob. "He and I work together quite a bit in the studio. The jazz training adds not just knowledge of the genre but chops. Graeme's ability to come up with unique chord progressions is rare for Celtic guitarists, who are mostly self-taught. It helps to contribute more new ideas."

Those ideas spark one another to create pieces that have their own particular colour,

pattern, shape—keeping things varied and at the same time organic, three minds on parallel wavelengths coming together to form a greater swell.

“There’s a couple of different ways it happens,” Jacob explains. “Sometimes we’ll sit down and come up with ideas and write a whole tune or a whole set all at once. Sometimes it starts with an idea from one of us.

“Graeme is a tune-composing monster, and he or James will say, ‘We’ve got a new tune’—they live down the road from one another whereas I’m on the other side of town—and one of them will make a rough recording and send it to me and I’ll jam with it, then we come together for a rehearsal. But sometimes at rehearsals we try to write from scratch to come up with interesting licks that may have potential for a set. Anyway, early in the process we all get together. Generally, it goes through quite a lot of changes.”

The set *Rest In Pineapple*—which can be heard in full on NUA’s website—captures the band’s playful spirit, structural intelligence, and in-depth understanding of Scottish and Irish idioms, while its title shines a sidelight on their lifestyle.

“It’s probably my favourite on the album,” Jacob confides. “Naming tunes is one of our

ongoing jokes. Graeme wrote both of them here—*Rest In Pineapple*, which goes into *Rushin’ Draggin’*. He lives in a big house with a bunch of mates, one of whom tears down stage set-ups at a music venue. He gets to take home some things, so there was this prop that was a weird, tombstone kind of thing, RIP, but it was like a pineapple. He took it home and made a fountain out of it, spending hours and hours doing it. That’s where Graeme got the name. He writes a lot of the more dynamic and weird time-signature tunes. It’s a very odd-sounding jig without the layers.”

According to Jacob, NUA’s time and tempo shifting and predilection for crooked tunes (*airs croches*) with unusual numbers of bars and other quirks most likely reflect Graeme’s fascination with rhythmic oddity rather than any Balkan or other Eastern European influences.

“I’m sure there’s a bit of that, but we don’t listen to much world music. Graeme is a very rhythmic guy, and maybe he just likes challenging himself. He loves writing and I think he wants to push envelopes. The second tune of *Rest In Pineapple* is in 5, one of the trickiest time signatures to play. It’s a great transition going from 6/8 into 5/4. I find it really interesting melodically as well as rhythmically. That’s

why we decided to make *Rest In Pineapple* a single—if we can only show one tune to everybody, that would be it.”

Smuggler’s Cove—also on the website—is another *Flow* standout, with a striking mid-set effect when the music vanishes, then comes back very quietly, gradually, gaining strength in volume, tempo, and texture.

“These tunes are simpler—a melodic, slower rhythmic tune, starting with the simple melody. The layers build and Graeme comes in with a really good chord progression, and a rhythm that goes in and out of a 4/4 reel groove and then into a 6 groove.

“James had this idea of a recurring fiddle line. You hear that build up. At first we didn’t know what to do with it. After several weeks of rehearsals we kept grooving on it. I felt it didn’t need to become more complex, but to have layering—like James doing some harmonies. Instead of going into a reel—our first thought—we decided to go back to the original melody. That sounded really cool. There are actually 64 layers of strings on the build-up in the middle, so for a simple tune it’s a lot of work. I had that goose-bump feeling when it starts up so quiet and builds. It still gives me goose bumps even now to hear it.”

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Coco Love Alcorn

Strength conquers adversity on a fine album that, ultimately, celebrates the human spirit.
By Patrick Langston

Sometimes during a concert, Coco Love Alcorn asks the audience to hand her a magazine, a bus ticket, whatever they have on hand. Then she'll improvise a song from what she reads—not to demonstrate her vocal facility but to show how a looper works.

You know what a looper is, right? It's an electronic device, often pedal-operated, that lets a musician record a few bars of music then play it back as he or she layers more vocals or instrumental lines over the original one. It's very cool and can create a kind of one-person band or choir.

"We've made songs out of people's overdue bills, Visa statements, all kinds of things," says Alcorn with a laugh, explaining that she does

that to show audiences how a looper works.

That's important because the device was key to Alcorn's enticing new album *Wonderland*. Long a lover of improvisation and harmony, she'd been searching for a fresh approach to composing. She'd tried vocal loopers in the past but says they "never felt intuitive".

Then she happened on a five-track, table-top version, and her musical possibilities abruptly expanded.

Beginning with the gospel-accented *The River*, she laid down a track then began singing over it, basically sampling her own voice—one that's remarkably pliant, adventurous, attuned to both playfulness and drama—to build the song. It was, she says, a singularly "organic" way to compose, one that allowed her to put her voice at the centre of creating rather than having to divert some of her attention to also playing a musical instrument as she sang.

Turns out that the looper, which was used to write about two-thirds of the new album, was instrumental in opening up other musical avenues for Alcorn. In 2014, she posted a DIY

version on YouTube of herself singing *The River*—the surging and redemptive song is rooted in her memories of a beloved river near her grandparents' home in Antigonish, NS, where she spent many summers as a child—and choirs began snapping it up. She soon realized she'd written a kind of choral music with a broad appeal. Indeed, a choir joins her on this and other tracks on the new album.

That unexpected choral response to her song struck a chord.

"I've always been fascinated with layered voices. Voices are us; they are directly from us. When your body is resonating, you're having this physiological experience," she says. "I wrote the music on this album to be as conducive to group singing as possible."

Turns out that Alcorn's association with group singing stretches back to high school, when she led a four-part a cappella group. And while that experience is now years ago, her rediscovery of choral singing means she'll be performing with choirs on her tour to support the new album.

As well, audience singalongs are an important part of her live shows—but singalongs with a difference. Instead of waiting until the second set as many performers do, she introduces an appropriate tune very early in the first set, being careful to select something that is simple for the audience to join in on, something that “builds their confidence”.

Alcorn compares the strategy to a dance where the first couple to step out on the floor gives permission for the next one to follow suit and even take the dance to the next level of complexity. “It gives a safety zone for others,” she says.

The new album, her tenth, embodies other musical changes for the artist, who is as comfortable and riveting on a jazz or folk tune as she is on an R&B or country song.

“As I’ve been getting older [she’s 41], I’ve been getting simpler in writing: the chords, arrangements, melodies, lyrics. It’s easy to fear being derivative, and in the past that drove me to being overly complicated. Now instead of rejecting the first idea, (I) take a pause, and maybe it’s OK.”

That simplicity—one uses the word in its best sense—underpins *Unbreakable*, which she co-wrote with her old pal and fellow musician Ian Sherwood. A funky tune with triumphant

vocal flourishes and a chorus that channels the marching feet of generations of social justice protestors, the song drives home the same empowering message again and again: strength, both individual and collective, will conquer adversity.

Other changes helped usher in *Wonderland*.

After years of relentless touring, Alcorn found herself mostly at her current home in Owen Sound, ON, raising her daughter, Elie, for a five-year period starting about 2010. She says being largely cut off from touring was a little scary and lonely, but that sinking into the community and domestic life “gave me time and space to think about what the next set of songs were going to be. Before, a lot of the songs came from the energy of being out on the road and go, go, go. Now I was able to zone in on what I wanted to do,” including, of course, connecting more with the human voice.

Fellow musician James Keelaghan urged that impulse along by asking her, one day in her kitchen, what kind of album she wanted to make next. Her response was an album inspired by the human spirit, but not connected to a particular religious faith or even anti-faith.

Alcorn’s resolve to explore that ineffable issue has yielded some fine material, including the album’s title track. Led by a measured

piano and backed by the slow swell of choral singing, the soulful song celebrates the world, rather than some distant afterlife, as the true wonderland. “*What I have is what I need*,” she sings.

It would never do to profile Alcorn without acknowledging her father, jazz singer John Alcorn. Her father was a major influence on her musical career, says Coco, coaching her when she led that high school a cappella group and occasionally singing with her onstage at one of his or her gigs.

“We love collaborating, but we’ve never made an album together,” she says. “It’s one of those things we’ve always assumed would happen.”



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Blackie And The Rodeo Kings

An all-star cast of country and roots luminaries fuel a multi-headed monster that now turns 20.

By Roger Levesque

Stephen Fearing, Colin Linden, and Tom Wilson enjoy one of the most unexpected but enduring partnerships on Canada's roots music landscape. But how does it feel as the greater sum of that partnership, Blackie And The Rodeo Kings, hits 20?

Tracking down Toronto-native Linden in Nashville, Vancouver-born Fearing in Victoria, and Hamilton's Wilson on the road to Chicago was easy enough. Coaxing them to examine their musical brotherhood took a pause for reflection.

"In some ways, it feels like we're still scratching the surface," Linden muses.

That scratch includes eight accomplished albums since they first got together for what was supposed to be a one-off tribute covering songwriting mentor Willie P. Bennett, the original 1996 *Blackie & The Rodeo Kings* release with Bennett guesting.

Echoing that initial experiment and marking their anniversary, their new *Kings And Kings* is a sequel of sorts to the 2011 guest-laden *Kings And Queens* (both from FU:M). Except this time all the guests are guys: Rodney Crowell, Nick Lowe, Bruce Cockburn, City and Colour, Vince Gill, Keb' Mo'...the list of elder heroes and up and comers goes on.

After producing all previous BARK albums, Linden was central to *Kings And Kings*. He just hit 40 years in the music business in October, with an exhaustive list of credits behind him, and using his connections from living in Nashville for 19 years he roped in talents as diverse as Buddy Miller, Eric Church, Jason Isbell, and Raul Malo.

It doesn't hurt that he's been technical supervisor on the television show *Nashville* (heading into its fifth season), and bandleader on the cast's live tours (25 shows this year). The disc's rocking send-off with the Men of Nashville, Linden's *Where The River Rolls*, grooves with camaraderie.

Songs were set down over some 18 months, most guests adding their vocals to prepared tracks. The numerous string instruments and voices of Fearing, Linden, and Wilson are heard with BARK's longtime backing crew,

bassist Johnny Dymond, drummer Gary Craig, and keyboardist John Whynot.

For Linden, making *Kings And Kings* felt easier than *Kings And Queens* on several levels.

"When you're dealing with male singers sharing vocals, most of the time the ranges are similar, so it was simpler to write melodies that both singers could sing, like Tom and Jason Isbell instead of Tom and Lucinda Williams for example. But a woman singing to a man brings a different dynamic so there were some subtle differences."

Fearing, Linden, and Wilson all aim to write something beyond typical love songs.

"On one level, I think all songs are love songs but your viewpoint can change and be informed by time. The great thing about dividing up the writing and singing is that you get to really enjoy each other's music. And the songs that I bring into a Blackie record are hard to even imagine on one of my own records."

One of Linden's favourites is the album's evocative opening, *Live By The Song*, one of the few songs the trio has written together. The ode to the road finds Fearing and Rodney Crowell on vocals.

"It really seems to reflect what we've meant



to each other for the last 20 years, so it needed someone with a great deal of gravitas and passion singing it. I thought Rodney did a fantastic job."

Linden's approach to producing BARK's records hasn't changed much.

"One thing I've learned about Blackie over the years is that it's kind of a multi-headed monster that should be celebrated and not necessarily controlled, that we acknowledge and love. We've always had the best times recording when we've left it to the fates to get things started."

He notes that producing BARK and performing with them are two different things, but...

"I get something from Blackie that I don't get from anything else. It's about presenting my own music and playing a sideman at the same time, but there's a familial part to it that I really treasure."

Kings And Kings finds organic vibes with old friends like Cockburn, who drifts in and out of French with Linden on *A Woman Gets More Beautiful*. Vince Gill knew some of Willie P. Bennett's songs so it was natural to have him do Bennett's *This Lonesome Feeling*. And Nick Lowe was "someone we idolize," but they never expected him to sing a whole song.

For Fearing, BARK's two guest albums have been out of the normal studio experience.

"We didn't always know when we were recording a song who the guest would be, so it was often only afterwards that they turned into real collaborations. It was about how we make this a Blackie song and a Blackie record, that sound, and still show respect to the song and the artist singing it."

Lowe's lingering cameo came on a song Fearing co-wrote with Andy White, *The Secret Of A Long-Lasting Love*. As Fearing recalls...

"Nick said, 'Yes, I'd like to be on the record, and yes, I like that song,' but then he said, 'I'd like to re-write it'. I thought, it's Nick Lowe, he can do whatever he wants."

In the end, Lowe only changed two lines, making them more appropriate to his own experience.

"That's one for my songwriters class. He tweaked and sharpened the song and made it better. But sometimes a guest vocalist just wants to sing half the song or sing harmony or the bridge. The perspective they bring to it can really change the song."

Fearing's effort with co-singer Raul Malo (The Mavericks) on *Highwire* is a highlight for the "Roy Orbison quality to the melody", while an older Fearing co-write, *Long Walk To Freedom*, (inspired by Nelson Mandela's speeches) finally makes it's recorded debut with an earthy vocal from Keb' Mo'. The co-write *Live By The Song* was a matter of stitching fragments together.

"I stole the line 'live by the song' from Roger Miller and wrote a verse and a chorus. but I was stuck. Someone has to see what you sometimes can't as the original writer and it brought this energy."

BARK's continuing collaboration is a surprise gift that keeps on giving for Fearing.

"It has given each of us a chance to grow up or grow older, or just grow in a band unlike any other opportunity could have offered. It started with the template of disparate elements coming together around another person's (Bennett's) music. Sometimes we even fight over who's going to sing his songs."

Wilson was in the passenger's seat cruising to Chicago to perform in his alternate persona Lee Harvey Osmond when he made time to ponder his cryptic role in the circus that is BARK.

He was pleasantly surprised with the songs on the *Kings* album, unplanned or otherwise. His tune *Bitter & Low* takes on an air of urbane soul with San Francisco's Fantastic Negrito guesting, as Linden and Fearing add guitar. The

bittersweet *Beautiful Scars* (co-written with his son Thompson Wilson) has become a minor hit with a superb vocal from (his suggestion) City & Colour's Dallas Green. *Land Of The Living*, about keeping stories alive against the onslaught of change, was penned with Steve Earle in mind but wound up inspiring Alabama's Jason Isbell.

Maybe it's Wilson's dusty baritone but his songs on *Kings* have a deeper, darker feel.

"I don't take BARK lightly. We brought some serious themes to *Kings And Queens*, too. I'm not a protest singer or trying to start a social movement, but BARK does deserve a depth and that's something I try to bring to it."

Wilson is loath to examine the secret of their success too closely.

"It's like staring into the sun too long. Your crops are growing and you're feeling nice and warm, you've got your solar panels working, but you don't want to look too deeply where all that goodness is coming from. That's how it's been for us from Day 1. We have no idea what the fuck we do. All we know is that we love doing it together. You don't want the facts to ruin the process."

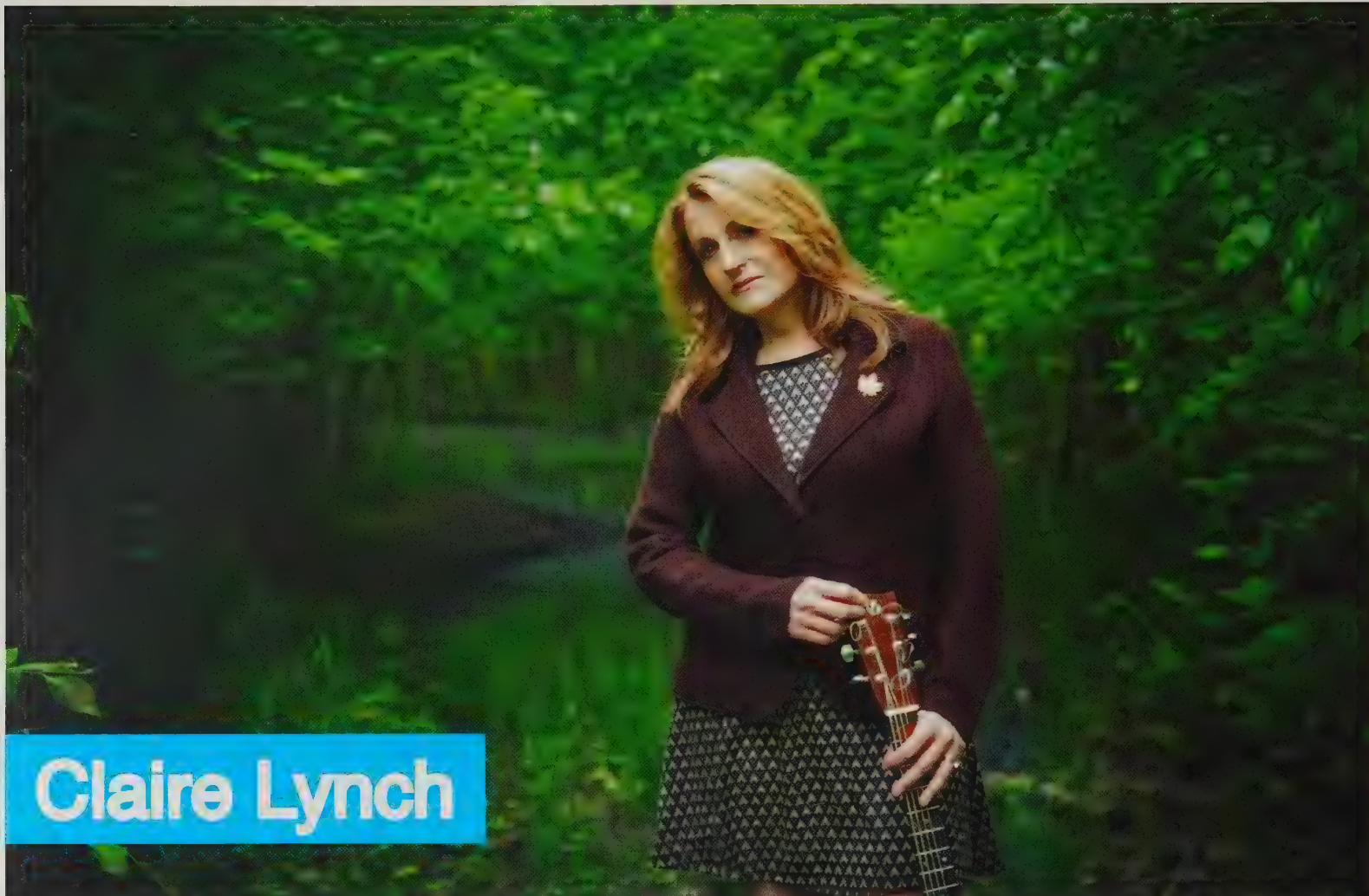
What would Willie P. Bennett have to say about BARK turning 20?

Linden ventures a guess:

"He would put his hands together, point them up, hold them to his chest, and say, 'Thank you'. He was a tremendously humble man. He knew we loved him and he was greatly appreciative and supportive of that."



Leo R. Stephen Fearing,
Colin Linden
and Tom Wilson



American bluegrass doyenne pays tribute to the formidable talents of Canadian songwriters.

By J. Poet

Claire Lynch has one of the most expressive voices in Nashville. She's a bluegrass singer, songwriter, band leader, sought-after session vocalist and a recording artist, with a keen creative spirit. Her last album, *Dear Sister*, was heavily influenced by Americana and bluegrass. The title track, an original co-written with Louisa Branscomb, was based on letters sent by a relative of Branscomb's to his sister during the Civil War. It won last year's International Bluegrass Music Association's Song of the Year Award.

Her latest record, *North by South*, sees her moving in an entirely different direction, turning north to deliver sparkling interpretations of folk, pop, and rock songs by well-known Canadian songwriters. Most Americans don't think of Canada when they hear the word bluegrass, despite long-running Canadian bands such as

The Duhks and The Dixie Flyers, but Lynch wasn't strictly thinking in terms of bluegrass when she started the project.

"I really wasn't looking for Canadian bluegrass songs, just wonderfully written songs my band and I could interpret," Lynch explains. "I made acquaintance with a number of bluegrass bands in Canada, through the International Bluegrass Music Association, a long time before I made the album, but that wasn't the inspiration for the record.

"I married a man from Toronto three years ago. When we started dating, he gave me an iPod Nano full of Canadian music and introduced me to a songwriting community in Canada that I was unaware of. As an American, I thought that was really sad. I began educating myself about the artists up there. They don't write with an American point of view. They take a more open-minded, more politically and socially conscious stance. Everybody knows Joni Mitchell and Neil Young, but we're ignorant about the scope of Canadian artists in the folk, pop, and bluegrass spheres. We share a lot, including a language, but there's a subtle difference between the way we look at everything—medicine, literature, music, and citizenship. I want this album to be a bit of a

bridge over that gap. I didn't make the album to suck up to Canadians as much as to open up a world of music unknown to my friends down here."

With the help of her husband, Lynch assembled a list of 50 potential songs. She started playing some of them live, to gauge audience reaction. With the possible exception of Gordon Lightfoot and Bruce Cockburn, most of the writers she chose were unknown to her American audience. "I'm a songwriter myself, so I have an ability to differentiate between a good song and a great song. I like 'em to be quirky melodically, or beautiful, with a unique melody and great lyrics. *Cold Hearted*, the Ron Sexsmith song, touched me deeply and he told me it was a very personal song to him. He's not afraid to use big words. I was trained in the Nashville songwriting community, where they talk about simplicity. The less-is-more approach, but when Ron sings, 'It could mean the ruination of your best laid plans,' people in the audience look up at me and say, 'Ruinination?'. I just love that," Lynch laughs.

When Compass Records gave her the nod to make *North By South*, she brought her band to her house and started working out arrangements. "I sat down with my guys—Jarrod

Walker, mandolin; Mark Schatz on bass; Bryan McDowell, lead guitar and fiddle—at my house and started playing tunes. Once it becomes live for the band and me, I can gauge how an audience is going to respond. Everybody has input on the arrangements, but they trust me to make the final musical decisions. It's a benevolent dictatorship.

"So far, Lynn Miles's *Black Flower* has been the crowd favourite. It's a very moving song, written after she visited a West Virginia coal mining community. I interviewed her and she said there are no coal mines in Ontario, but her father worked in an asbestos mine all his life."

When Lynch and her band went into the studio with producer Alison Brown, the sessions went quickly. They cut the tunes live, along with their special guests, Bela Fleck on banjo and Jerry Douglas on Dobro.

"I didn't want to make it too bluegrass," Lynch says. "I tried to display the songs with their prime intent, which is how I approach all my albums. I never think about it being bluegrass or not. You can always chop up a pop tune and add a mandolin and banjo, but my intent is to get at the heart of the song, with all its original beauty."

"This is the first time I worked with Alison as producer. I've known her for years and she's played on most of my albums. It was a comfortable, low-key situation. She's friendly, authoritative and musically knowledgeable. We had to do it quickly and efficiently, fitting in sessions between touring dates. Almost of all my vocals are the scratch vocals we used when we were laying tracks live with the band. I've never done that before."

The music on *North by South* crackles with the spontaneous energy the band created in the studio. Cris Cuddy's *Gone Again*, the story of a band's life on the road, is treated as a moody ballad. Fleck delivers his understated banjo work to compliment McDowell's fiddle and Walker's short mandolin solo. Lynch adds her desolate guitar work to *Black Flowers*, with McDowell's fiddle filling the background with haunted, ambient sustained notes. The band takes a rock'n'roll approach to David Francey's *Empty Train*, reproducing the stop-and-start rhythms of an old steam engine pulling away from a station, aided by Jerry Douglas on Dobro.

"We considered other songs by Francey," Lynch says, "including *Pandora's Box*, a song with a poignant political and social message, but bluegrass loves train songs. *Train* clicked the best with the band, so that's what we ended up doing. We really wanted to rock when we played it, so we just let it rip."



The Claire Lynch Band



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Steeped in old-time traditional tunes, this duo also air their concerns about big social issues.

By Mike Sadava

All it took was one song and they knew. Michael Beauchamp and Laurel Premo, who make up the Michigan-based duo Red Tail Ring, felt a strong musical chemistry after jamming on the old-time tune called *Going To Cairo* on fiddle and mandolin.

On the phone from Kalamazoo, Beauchamp recalls how in 2009 they met through mutual friends who knew they both had an interest in traditional music. At the time they were pursuing separate careers as singer/songwriters. Beauchamp was in Ann Arbor, where Premo lived, for a show, and she only had 10 minutes to spend with him.

"We had an opportunity to play one old-time tune, and on the basis of that old-time tune we

knew we wanted to play music together," he says.

Premo says they didn't exactly form a band that evening but, "we were struck with how good it felt. We both wanted to participate in traditional music and change our folk ways."

They soon changed their schedules and booked a bunch of shows together, performing separately and as a duo as they started working out traditional Appalachian tunes and writing together.

Seven years later, they have just released their fourth album, *Fall Away Blues*, which is starting to gather critical acclaim across the United States. The album is a fine melding of contemporary issues, that is, the message that has always been the essence of folk music, with traditional sounding melodies. The overall sound of guitar and clawhammer banjo or fiddle is spare, with every note counting, and the harmonies of their voices, which fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, are haunting.

Critics have compared them to Gillian Welch and David Rawlings, but to these Canadian ears a comparison to Pharis and Jason Romero

seems more in order. No need for overdubs or guest performers here—they make a full sound with just two.

They still perform traditional tunes but they also write about issues like last year's mass murder in Kalamazoo or the fracking that is shaking up much of the United States by injecting millions of gallons of water and chemicals deep into the ground to extract oil.

They don't preach or just give an account of the news of the day but bring it down to a human level. *Shale Town* recounts the story of fracking from the perspective of a young, poor family promised a lot of money to rent out part of their land to an oil company: "*I was hungry and young / and pantry was bare. Land man held / said the money was there. In the end the land is shaking / and the water that used to be clear has turned brown. Just leave it be, you don't know what you've done.*"

"We're talking in a way where it's from a human standpoint," Beauchamp says. "Sometimes the problem with topical songs and politicized songs is the message is so important that it's put forward at the cost of a good song."

For the message to be successful the song has to be good... If it's not a song that moves you, you're not going to listen to it."

They're not confined to the old-time silo despite the predominance of clawhammer banjo. For instance, *Gibson Town* (Kalamazoo was the home of the Gibson guitar factory until it was moved in the '80s) has a definite blues feeling, which is totally appropriate for a song about mass murder.

They eschew the fake southern drawls that plague some old-time singers, but sing in their local Michigan accent, which is pretty close to the way Canadians talk.

"I love a southern accent, and the inflections of that speech, and I love mimicking singers and songwriters. I have a great Bob Dylan imitation in my back pocket. But I think it's important we respect where we're coming from, and we're from Michigan."

They were both deeply influenced by Michiganders. Beauchamp mentions his father, who exposed him to Doc Watson, and they were both taught by Joel Mabus, a local musician who has a bit of a national profile. Premo is grateful for his mentoring, and for the fact that they still get together to play with him now that they've forged their own musical identities.

Premo took a rather circuitous route via Scandinavia to develop her own appreciation of traditional music and to hone her skills on the violin. She took a college semester at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, studying Finnish music, which had always been around her as she grew up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

"It really helped me focus," she says. "I wasn't nearly as passionate about the violin then. While I was over there I realized how to go about learning fiddle, learning from the masters and learning tunes by myself."

Her ears opened up to American traditional music when fiddle legend Bruce Molsky visited her program to teach American fiddle styles.

"That turned me around and made me excited about American music; and before, I was searching for something far from home. It gave me an appreciation for something I was overlooking."

One of Beauchamp's college majors was musicology, which he calls, "a shallow dive into a really deep pool". His studies gave him a deep appreciation of the effort it takes to become an accomplished musician, and between that and his travels, helped him find the commonality of musicians around the world.

Their tour schedule has brought them all over the United States and a couple of brief forays to Canada, as well as Europe. They have a solid following in Sweden, where Premo has joined forces in a side project with Anna Gustavsson, who plays a Scandinavian bowed instrument called the nyckelharpa, which uses buttons to change the pitch of the strings.

The three will do some touring together in the spring, and the cross-pollination of musical genres will continue in the deft hands of this new generation of traditional musicians.



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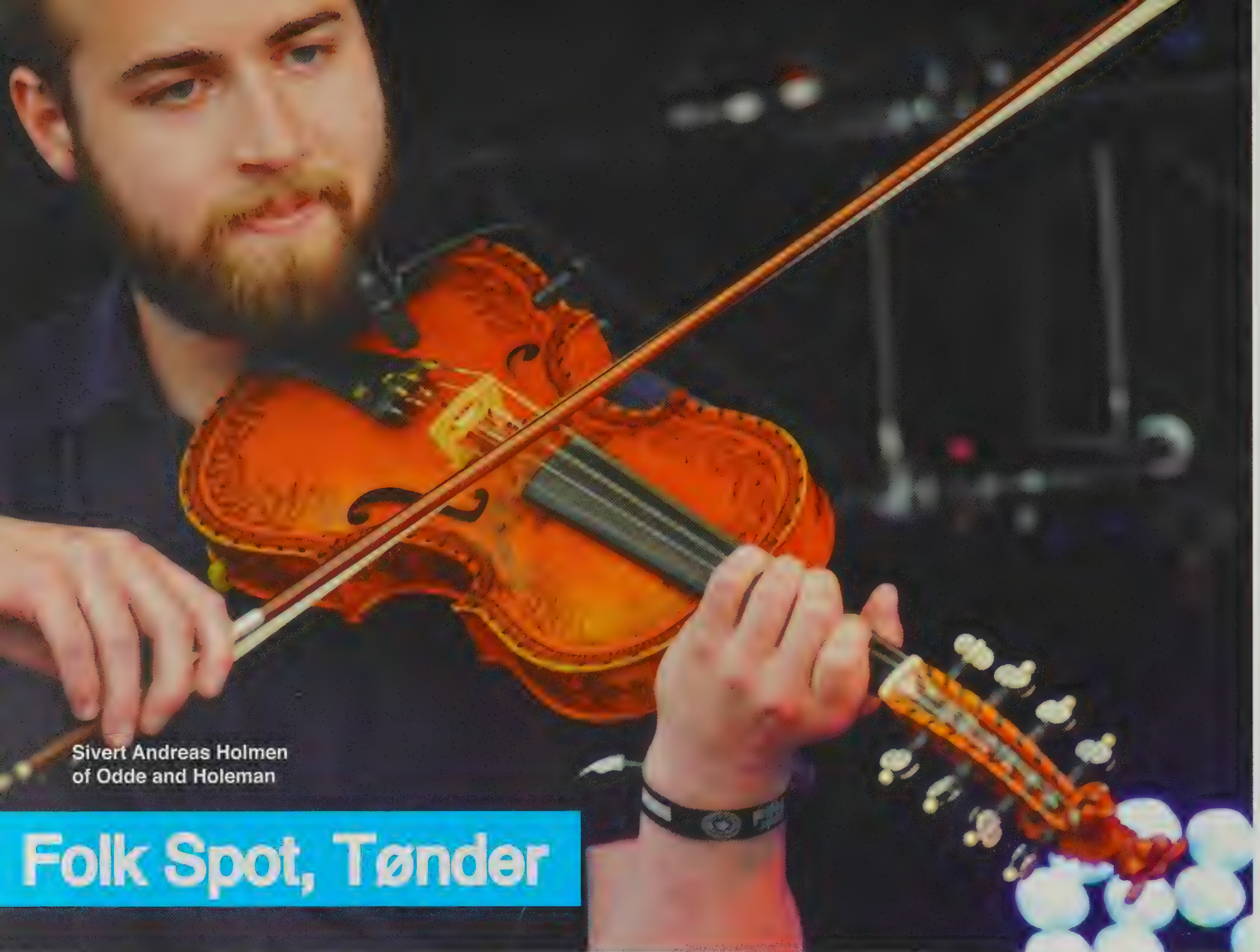
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SIX SHOOTER RECORDS



Sivert Andreas Holmen
of Odde and Høleman

Folk Spot, Tønder

Photo By: Steve Edge

Dispatches from Denmark: naked people, World Heritage sites, beer, music, music... By Roddy Campbell

The sun shines on Legoland as we fly into Billund, Denmark. Here in South Jutland, master carpenter Ole Kirk Christiansen invented Lego in 1932. And there are multiple giant samples of his legacy everywhere, including Legoland's Billund Family Resort minutes from the airport.

Another day, perhaps. *Penguin Eggs* staff—me and the missus—are on our way to the celebrated Tønder Festival (Aug. 25-28) and a seat at Folk Spot, an annual showcase that promotes Denmark's musicians and singers.

Tønder, the oldest market town in the country, lies 100 kilometres to the south, a mere walking distance from the German border. Its festival, of course, has a massive reputation for

its generous hospitality and a canny booking policy that often includes numerous Canadian artists. This year is no exception with the Barra MacNeils, Ben Miller and Anita MacDonald, The Dead South, Del Barber, Ten Strings And A Goat Skin, and The Fortunate Ones all in attendance. The ubiquitous Leonard Podolak is, by now, considered a local and he and former Duhk Jordan McConnell will lead an all-star band that includes Sarah Lee Guthrie (Arlo Guthrie's daughter).

To the west of the flat fertile fen lands that surround Tønder lies the Wadden Sea—a UNESCO World Heritage site—which stretches from Holland, along Germany's entire North Sea coast and up to Blåvandshug in Denmark. An estimated 10 million to 12 million migratory birds rest and forage for food there amidst the largest tidal flats on Earth.

We arrive in town two days early in order to recuperate from our long flight from Edmonton. And after a good night's sleep, we rent a car with that nice man Ian Davies from London's Sunfest and set off to take in some

of the stunning local sites. After scampering around giant windmills and ancient churches, we stop for tea and wonderful Danish cakes in an elegant old hotel right next to the king's summer palace. It sits on the oldest, and still cobbled, street in Denmark.

On the small island of Rømø—joined to the mainland by a narrow causeway—our road eventually fades into the sand and we drive around the dunes, agog at the numerous elderly late-summer visitors either swimming or relaxing in the nude. Fresh fish for supper and the odd jar of good Danish lager, and it's time for bed.

The following day, we drive across the border to nearby Seebüll, Germany, to visit the museum and former home of the Expressionist painter Emil Nolde (1867-1957). Much to our astonishment, there is no apparent border. No border guards. No immigration control, just a small sign that says, "Welcome to Germany".

What remains of Nolde's paintings—the Nazis burned much of his early work—are truly impressive and we spend a pleasant morning

wandering around the remnants of his beautiful gardens. And to our great delight, we discover that German beer costs a fraction of its Danish competition.

Thursday rolls around soon enough, and it's down to business. Scotland's Peatbog Fairies are in full flight on an outdoor stage when we first arrive on site. Their high-energy combination of bagpipe tunes and electronica clearly strikes a note with the massive audience and their encore is assured. Adam Holmes and The Embers perform in a beautiful, custom-built tent, adorned with mirrors, coloured glass, and lavish wood panels. It's packed to the rafters, too, with a largely partisan audience hanging on to the confident, casual elegance of his every note. While the subtle elements of a young John Martyn still remain, Holmes has come on leaps and bounds since his debut release, *Airs And Graces*, in 2013.

Winnipeg's Del Barber's in really fine form, too, as his trio work their way through a rather alt.country set to a packed crowd that is both bemused and captivated by his hilarious stage patter. We snatch the last of The Fortunate Ones' set and they appear sublimely contented. My notes for Jason Isbell simply state: "What's the fuss?". Ouch! Backstage in the green room, we set the world to rights with Leonard Podolak before strolling through the grounds back to our hotel.

Friday arrives with the sun. And on site we meet Rasmus Weshner, our warm, generous and efficient Folk Spot host. Folk Spot is arranged in conjunction with the folk arm of ROSA, the Danish Rock Council—yes, as in rock'n'roll—to promote Danish folk music abroad. And they've invited international media and booking agents of various stripes from around the globe. Canada is well represented with the aforementioned Mr. Davies in attendance, along with Steve Edge (the Rogue Folk Club), Rob Oakie (Music PEI), Aengus Finnan (Folk Alliance International), Bob Jensen (JMI), Gilles Garrand (SPDTQ), and Morgan Hamill (Winnipeg Folk Music Festival).

Rasmus and his colleagues line up, ostensibly, seven Danish acts and a duo from Norway for our listening pleasure over the course of two days. It's a tough gig for the artists as we all sit at three large tables at the front of the stage. The public pile in behind us. But what soon becomes abundantly clear is traditional fiddle music thrives in Scandinavia.

The opening spirited sextet D.u.K., for instance, features four fiddlers along with a double bass and acoustic guitar, which they weave cordially through a set that draws from both the Danish and British folk traditions. The trio

Fru Skagerrak hail from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Resourceful fiddlers to a woman, their bold and inspired polkas and slides make a serious impression. Norwegians Odde (fiddle, viola) & Holmen (hardanger fiddles) are clearly enjoying themselves, and their upbeat dance tunes prove contagious if occasionally a tad one-dimensional.

Not that it's all about fiddles, far from it. Backing themselves mainly with a ukulele and double bass, the duo of Elof & Wamberg sound like one of those germ-free New Age Windham Hill Records from a century back. Infinitely more interesting, however, are Himmerland with their African and Balkan fusion greased with the occasional lick of reggae. They generate a real buzz amongst the assembled dignitaries. Sherzandum, too. With their frantic combination of klezmer brass and quirky, animated time signatures, their musical antics put a smile on everybody's face. Nice one.

Husband-and-wife team of Ditte (vocals, fiddle) and Sigurd Hockings (acoustic guitar) make a welcome break from the madness. Ditte's a fine fiddler and thrilling singer and a wonderful narrator of traditional tales. And Sigurd's an intense picker but her perfect foil.

Which leaves us with the most accomplished of all the Danes, the band Basco, joined for the day by vocalist Jullie Hjetland. Recipients of two Danish Music Awards, their music is startlingly original, from multi-layered dance tunes that pilfer from Celtic to klezmer and numerous good things in between, as well as gorgeously pensive, mournful balladry. And it's all played heroically with a singular instrumental proficiency.

Toasts all round, then, to Rasmus and his fine crew for their warm, extensive hospitality and judicious selection of artists.

Befitting a festival of this stature, the music

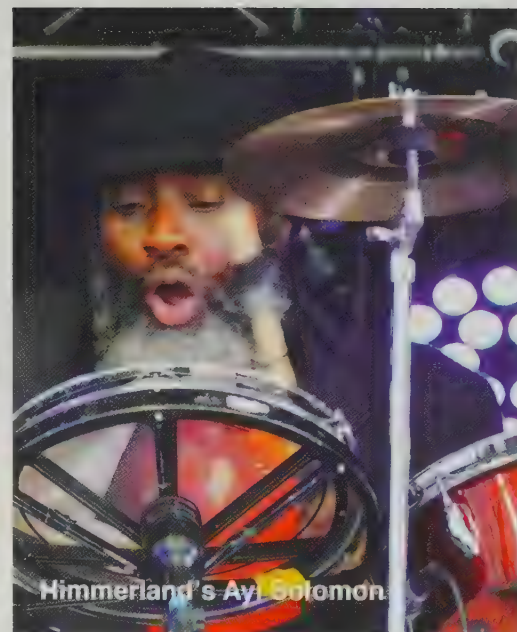


Photo By: Steve Edge

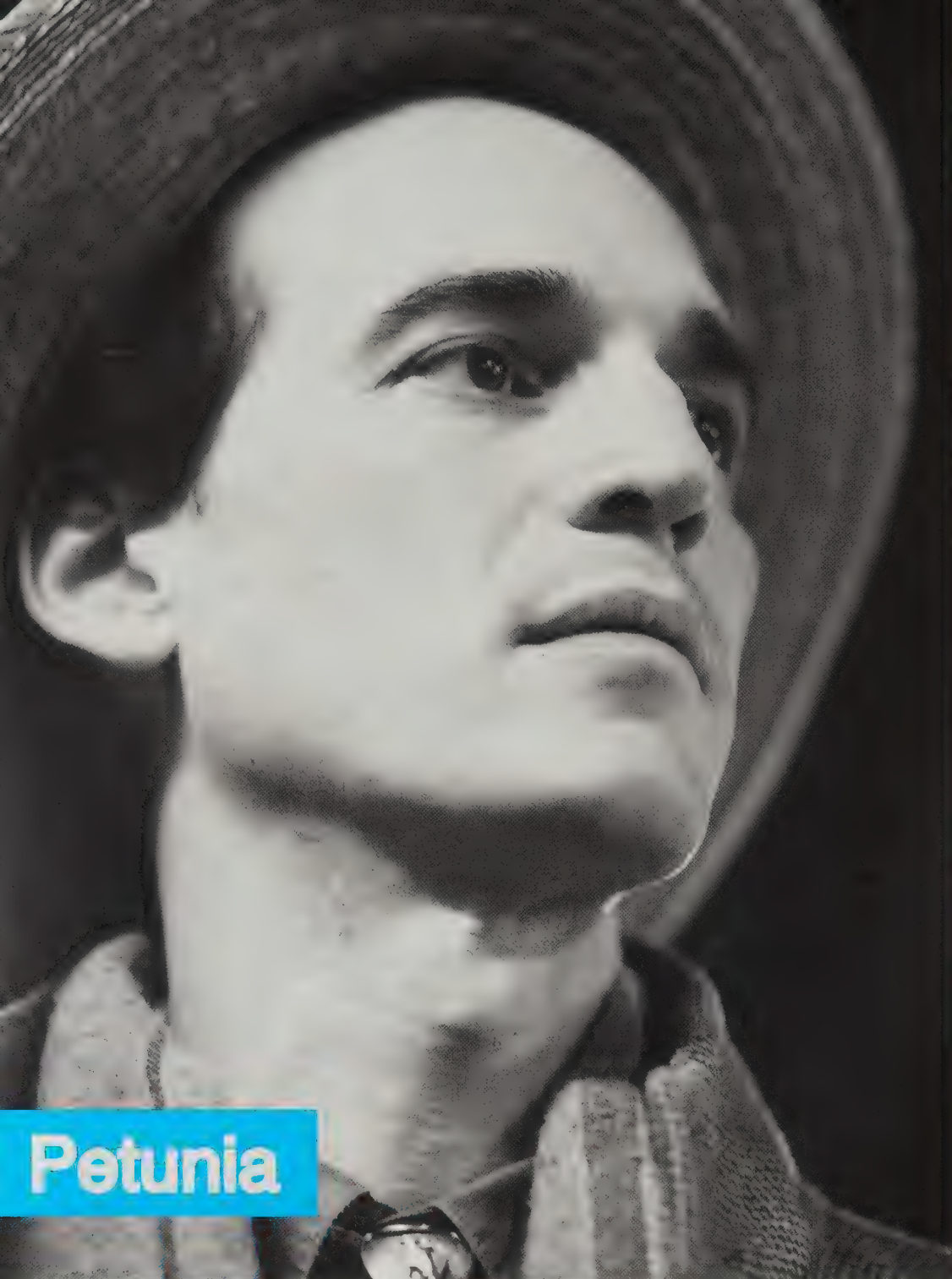
goes long into the night. The last act at the self-explanatory Klubscenen doesn't start until 1 a.m. In all, Tønder offers 11 venues that range in capacity from circus-size tents to portable pubs. Indeed, fine food and drink appears as essential here as the music. We're talking tables covered with starched cloths, dainty napkins, and leather-bound menus that offer gourmet food. Surrounded by a constant cacophony of such voices as Karine Polwart, Roseanne Cash, Blind Boys of Alabama...it's all truly surreal.

But Sunday rolls around soon enough, and with it comes the rain. We're leaving early to catch a plane to Sardinia for a short, non-musical break. Before we leave, Steve Edge assures us that Eliza Carthy and The Wayward Band were epic at midnight. And in the van to the airport, we chuckle about one of our favourite new discoveries: The Dead South—a raucous bluegrass combo from Regina, SK.

Watch this space.



Photo By: Steve Edge



Petunia

He formed his formidable roots from classic Jimmie Rodgers and Carter Family recordings.

By Gillian Turnbull

The moment Petunia's music was firmly embedded in my consciousness is a memorable one. The late-afternoon sun was settling over the harbour in Sydney, Cape Breton, casting watery light into the room of the bed and breakfast where I was staying. In my hands: volume 1 of Karl Knausgaard's tome, *My Struggle*, a memoir whose hallmark is its narrator's deep interiority, winding paths

into the subconscious that rarely come up for air.

Paralleling Knausgaard's meandering was Petunia's *Inside Of You*, a song I had in my headphones, with lyrics that lamented our collective loss of innocence and called on listeners to search for beauty in the everyday. I was alone on that trip, driving pieces of the Cabot Trail, pausing to sit by the water, coming back to nights of reading and writing in my room.

I recounted this experience to Petunia a year later as we lounged outside Reg Hartt's Cineforum in Toronto, where Petunia was playing a solo show later that night. Often backed by his group The Vipers, their rockabilly style derived from the remnants of Ray Condo's earlier work often a signature of his sound,

Petunia was traveling east without them this time. "Does that ever happen to you?" I asked him – surely the texts of his songs were the result of moments where art forms merge and swirl, complementing each other in the depths of our minds.

The day was hot, sun burning behind the Cineforum, while clothes lines gripped T-shirts and socks tossing in the wind. Known by the stage name bestowed on him by an early mentor, Petunia crossed his legs and leaned forward in the rickety white plastic lawn chair while he reflected on the question.

"That's cool," he said. Referring to the surrealist André Breton, who felt the best experience of film was to walk in at random and take in a few moments that would settle into your consciousness, Petunia is always in the practice of learning from new inspirations that may or may not complement each other.

"I assume that I'm just feeding myself," he said, "If I'm reading, or if I'm learning or doing stuff. But it's not my style to sit down and go, 'Oh, OK, I'm going to make this a study and try it'. Doesn't work for me. It goes into my head, becomes part of myself, and then if it comes out in a song, it does."

This is Petunia's default setting. Throughout our conversation, he kept returning to that same idea, that if we remain open, music, ideas, characters, films, books all seep in and stay. We may not know it at the time, finding out down the road when the product of all that absorption emerges.

"It's like jazz. The way jazz is taught now, the point is to learn and forget. So you can have the understanding and then break all the rules, or just forget that you've learnt it. And not adhere necessarily to some rule. That's the balancing act. To learn what you can, but to forget what you've learned and not pay attention or not heed rules."

Early mentors such as Hartt, who rented a room to Petunia and helped him learn techniques in filmmaking and movie scoring, demonstrated that the right combination of know-how and confidence could lead to artistic experimentation, perhaps groundbreaking works. Since then, Petunia has charged into composing and recording, averaging a new album once every 18 months. His prolific output is matched in his touring: what began as a couple of dips into New Brunswick during the summer has morphed into an annual intense set of dates taking him across Ontario, through Quebec, and into the deepest reaches of the Maritime provinces.

Petunia appears to have a singular mandate: keep you guessing. You never know if he'll

play solo, with a recording partner such as Nathan Godfrey, or a raucous backing band such as Ray Condo's. Touring Scandinavia with Godfrey illuminated the gaps in interpreting a song's meaning, which Petunia likens to the effects knowing other languages—written, spoken, musical—can do to influence creation, while never fully taking over the process.

In Scandinavia, he says, the audience, "Understands English, and they like country music. Old-time music, blues, bluegrass. When I listen to French songs, I can understand what's going on, but most of the time the poetical portent of the song is kind of lost on me. So the poetry if you will. The poetry surrounding what's going on, surrounding the lyrics, is lost. Same thing in Sweden, or Norway, it was a rare personality that would come up and really understand what was going on."

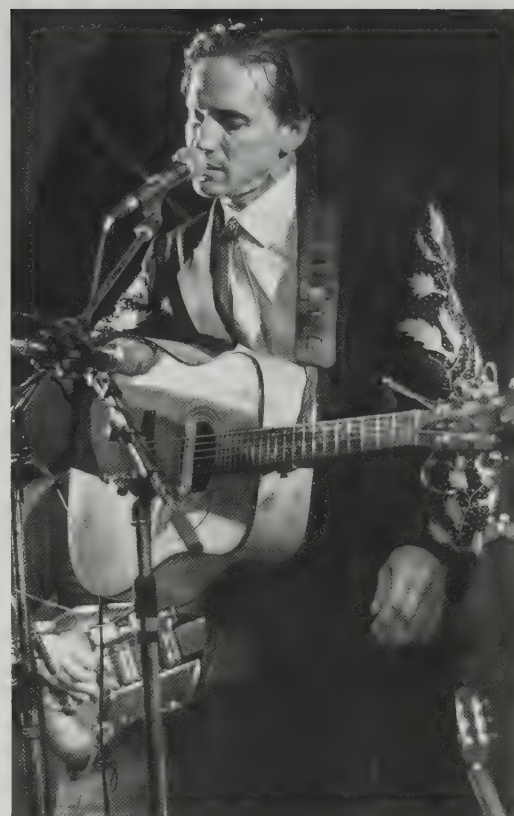
He might also fill his albums with a series of covers and then turn his full attention to songwriting. Dabbling in film has lent him a clear vision for his elaborate video productions. Mostly, though, he's a musical sponge, absorbing styles constantly. "Eventually when I'm writing a song, things from the past resurface, whether they be country, roots, blues, rockabilly, Gypsy, French, cabaret, folk, rock, whatever it is."

Petunia's musical roots are just that—roots.

Beginning with classic country compilations and recordings by Hank Williams, The Carter Family, and Jimmie Rodgers, he fashioned his style on the sounds of old country. Some of those influential songs he doesn't even remember: "There's a lot of music that I listen to on tape from Sheila's [Gostick, an early mentor] collection and I don't know who they are. Or they're tapes that I made from radio shows." All of these are evident on his latest release, *Dead Bird on the Highway*, where he included several covers alongside his originals. His signature yodel decorates the opening track, *Blue Yodel Blues*, bridging the near-century gap between him and Jimmie Rodgers, while other covers such as Otis Blackwell's *Oh What a Wonderful Time* offer up a return to the raucous noise of 1920s jazz.

His originals are a little darker. *Death Himself* is haunted by soaring pedal steel and a Petunia's creaking lower register, and *Chained*, the album's first single, captures the song's quirky structure and the album's overall aesthetic in an epic narrative. Don't mistake *I'm Shakin'* as a Jack White cover—Petunia went all the way back to the Little Willie John original via The Blasters. A real genre trip, *Dead Bird* shows off his affection for just about anyone in roots music you could imagine.

As he absentmindedly patted a neighbour-



hood cat snaking around the chair legs, he gave this summary of his musical self: "I read one of Bill Monroe's biographies and in it he says you only have to hear a style of music once to absorb it." If so, who knows what Petunia will offer next.

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The Earls of Leicester

Grammy Award-winning aural time travellers pay homage to the founding fathers of bluegrass.

By Bob Remington

The last time Jerry Douglas was in a band with matching clothes it was the height of the cringe-worthy era of leisure suits. The fashion felony of the musically stellar Country Gentlemen, which Douglas joined in 1973 at age 16, also included open-necked shirts with pointy collars, which the young Dobro prodigy grudgingly agreed to wear. But when it came to the cowboy hat adorned with feathers, or “road kill” as Douglas refers to it, he refused.

“The suits were terrible. They were awful. I hated wearing the damn thing. I said, ‘I’ll wear the damn suit’ but when it came to the hat, I said, ‘I’m not wearing that thing’. I couldn’t do it.”

Forty years and 14 Grammy Awards later, Douglas is on stage in the considerably more fashionable Earls of Leicester, with throwback clothing reminiscent of the era of the late Les-

ter Flatt and Earl Scruggs. The legendary duo and their band the Foggy Mountain Boys dominated bluegrass from 1948 until their breakup in 1969, and it is their sound that the Earls of Leicester emulates. The Earls’ self-titled debut disc, an homage to the Flatt and Scruggs sound, won the Grammy for best bluegrass album of 2014, an accomplishment that is worthy of a repeat with the band’s recently released album, *Rattle and Roar*.

With an expanding bluegrass universe populated by highly accomplished progressive acoustic groups such as the Punch Brothers, Railroad Earth, Crooked Still, and many others, The Earls of Leicester are a touchstone to the roots of the music.

“Everybody has a Flatt and Scruggs song or two in their repertoire but nobody was performing it exactly like they laid it down,” Douglas said by phone while tossing a ball for his Labrador retriever near his Nashville home. “Part of me starting (the Earls) was to educate a brand new audience that J.D. Crowe and the New South were not the original bluegrass band. That Tony Rice and me and Alison (Krauss) and Bela Fleck created bluegrass. Not true.”

The Earls of Leicester (a humorous twist borrowing on the East Midlands English city

pronounced “Lester”) is also an exercise in instrumental discipline for Douglas. Widely regarded as the most influential Dobro player of his generation, with tastes that run through jazz, blues, folk, and country, Douglas is forced by the Earls of Leicester to focus on the traditional style of Josh Graves, credited with introducing the Dobro to bluegrass music after joining Flatt and Scruggs’s Foggy Mountain Boys in 1955.

“I’m not trying to play like me (in the Earls),” says Douglas. “I’m trying to channel Josh Graves because it’s the only way to play this music. Anything else just doesn’t sound right. If I play my style in the Earls, it’s like, my god, Chick Corea has joined the band.”

Rattle and Roar, with a hefty 17 numbers, is based on the classic sound of Flatt and Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Boys during the early to mid-1960s. During that period, the two legends were joined by Graves, fiddler Paul Warren, mandolinist Curly Seckler, and Jack Tullock on bass. Recreating that sound with Douglas are Paul Cushman on banjo, Jeff White on mandolin, Barry Bales on bass, fiddler Johnny Warren (the son of Paul Warren), and guitarist Shawn Camp, a powerhouse vocalist in the role of Lester Flatt. It is an amazing lineup of accomplished players with

considerable bluegrass and country music pedigree. Their live shows are as much a piece of theatre as they are an aural time-travel experience.

"We can't do it any better than Flatt and Scruggs but we can get close enough to create that vibe, that feel. It's like good Celtic music that gets your blood boiling," says Douglas.

He was deeply influenced by Flatt and Scruggs growing up in Ohio and came to know Flatt, Scruggs, and Graves personally during his career. "I played with each of them and there was something about those guys that was different than anyone you would play with now."

The reaction to the Earls is beyond Douglas's expectations when he formed the band in 2013. "I've heard 15-year-old kids say, 'What kind of music is that?' I tell them, 'THAT is bluegrass music'. On the flip side, the older generation who had been completely fed up with new bands, they say, 'Thank, God. We never thought we'd ever hear that sound again. We thought it was dead'."

Douglas is happy to oblige, having been in bands that traditionalists never warmed to.

"I can honestly say this is the first band I've played in since J.D. Crowe and the New South (1975) where I won't get booed at a bluegrass festival. If anybody boos this, they really don't know why they are there. It's the real thing, or it's the closet thing to the real thing."

As we talk, the conversation turns to the question of when bluegrass music came to be. Although Kentucky mandolin player Bill Monroe is known as the "father of bluegrass", the late Earl Scruggs insisted to me during an interview years ago that, "I brought it here in 19-and-45"—the year he and Flatt joined Monroe's band, The Bluegrass Boys. Douglas agrees. "There was no bluegrass until Earl and Lester played with Bill Monroe. That's when it was born, in my opinion."

In 1945, Monroe's sound coalesced around Scruggs's hard-driving three-finger banjo roll and Flatt's lead singing, with Monroe on tenor. It is generally conceded, however, that it was a symbiotic relationship—that Monroe's foundation and his original material provided the platform for the flashy Scruggs and smooth singing and solid rhythm playing of Flatt. In the liner notes to *Rattle and Roar*, the three are referred to as the "co-founders" of bluegrass.

Rattle and Roar is pure pleasure. It is impossible not to break into a broad smile at the sound, led by Camp's lead singing and White's beautifully matching tenor. As for the clothes, Douglas blames Camp.

"He was the last guy I called and when he showed up he was dressed just like that. He started singing and I got cold chills and I knew we had a band." Clothes and all.

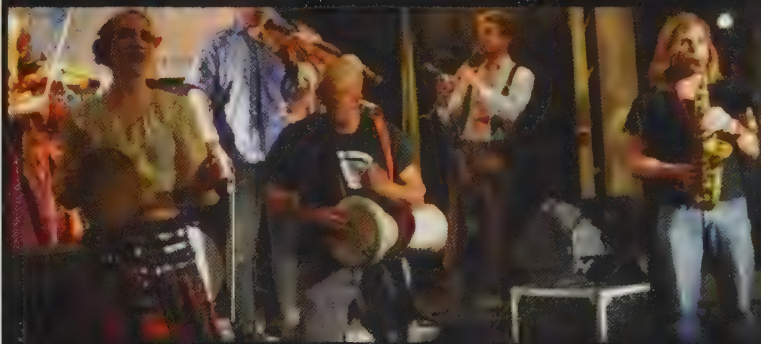


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The Godfather of Soul taught him to dance in prison and now he's on the brink of glory.

By Alan Kellogg

You reckon, when it comes to KaiL Baxley, it begins with *The Voice*. It's the special sort of vocal instrument that can make gushing fools of scribblers and fans, as we struggle to capture its deep, essential soulfulness with standard (bourbon and smoke, with a hint of menace and heartbreak) musicspeak blather. Suffice it to say that, if familiar enough, it is just the same a singular sonic presence that doesn't lope along the Mystery Highway very often.

Then there are the songs and arrangements, from stripped-down to horns, strings, choral parts—also beguilingly difficult to categorize beyond invoking something reliably soulful. This is much to the author's intent, who will tell you he couldn't give a toss for those who fret about pigeonholing and falling through the cracks, programming-wise. "I don't worry about that even a little bit. I don't know what to

call (what I do), but then that's not my job."

He knows what his job is now. Beyond that, he is a bright, good-lookin' young fella who seems exceedingly focused on his mission, carefully assembling the right elements to get the word out globally. He talks a lot about a musical community, and seems to mean it.

And then there is the Baxley back story, which is the stuff of a screenwriter's wet dream. Born in rural South Carolina in unfortunate parental circumstances, he was raised by his grandfather Woody Woodward, if not among us, still the daily guiding moral and ethical force in his life.

He met his birth father twice, and visited his mother in the same minimum-security prison where James Brown happened to be residing as an enforced guest of the state. The Godfather of Soul, who sang at Sunday services, took a liking to young KaiL, and delighted in trading dance steps.

Then there was the dream of becoming a Golden Gloves boxing champion and member of the U.S. Olympic team. That, and a slew of potential university football scholarships, were scuttled by his own troubles with the law and a bullet hole in his left shoulder. And might we mention—he rarely does—his tenure as a male

model, which took him around the world and apparently inculcated a lifelong penchant for the travelling life.

As he'll tell you, the musical thing came almost as an afterthought.

No more. He's recorded two albums to date, the first being *Heatstroke/The Wind and the War*, an impressive two-EP collection, and the second—which KaiL (the large L is a family thing) considers his first—the very excellent *A Light That Never Dies*.

We've spoken a few times, initially at a Dutch pancake house in downtown Edmonton, backstage bending elbows at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, and most recently from an Audi convertible and coffee shop in his spiritual hometown of Charleston, SC.

Our first meeting in August was on the opening day of the 2016 Olympics, and the former aspirant—who still trains—was wondering how the American team would fare, especially given the lifting of headgear rules. As it turned out, beyond a gold medal for a woman boxer, the U.S. team didn't do very well. "Well, boxing has taken a backseat here," he opined from the Audi, "and the Olympic judging stinks to high heaven."

Although a confirmed world traveller—with

a notable sabbatical in County Wicklow, Eire—he's lately changed his principal residence from New York to Los Angeles, which he pronounces a positive move.

"It's seems to be getting good, there are not the same distractions there for me, if you can believe it. It's classic car heaven, and I just bought a 1963 Comet. And the recording is going well." There are also opportunities there for film music, a looming frontier, as well as the headquarters for his fired-up management team.

As for his last effort, recorded in his triad of New York, L.A., and Charleston, he says *A Light That Never Fails* served its purpose. Moving the sessions around "kept things fresh, with different textures in each place, working with different players, including old friends. It opened a lot of doors, got some serious radio play and paid for my year. They're all stepping stones."

A favourite song? "Well, *Chasing James Dean* (inspired by a departed friend) was special, sort of like shedding skin. Hopefully each (album) is part of an evolutionary process; you just learn so much from each record."

He makes no bones that his first influences growing up were from Motown, Stax-Volt, soul music royalty. "Yeah, Otis Redding, The Supremes, those harmonies, that big sound. And then there was Springsteen, and hip-hop, which landed like a bomb."

Party politics is not his thing. We last spoke just before the (disastrous!) American election, and he was unmoved. "I try not to get involved. I've lived outside the country and I get it, the iron blinds, the media. Just what is the point of choosing the best liar? I'd prefer to dwell on the positive..."

As for the next, as-yet-untitled release, it's being recorded with a producer analogue—on tape and live off the floor. "That is my favourite, and when it's right, even if you work long hours, it can produce very satisfying results. I like to get out of my comfort zone and find that excitement."

Nor is KaiL Baxley prepared to sell his imprimatur to any record label that comes around, just for the supposed validation.

"Actually, I'd like to avoid labels if I possibly can. I'm trying to make friends, people I trust, assembling a solid team." A community?

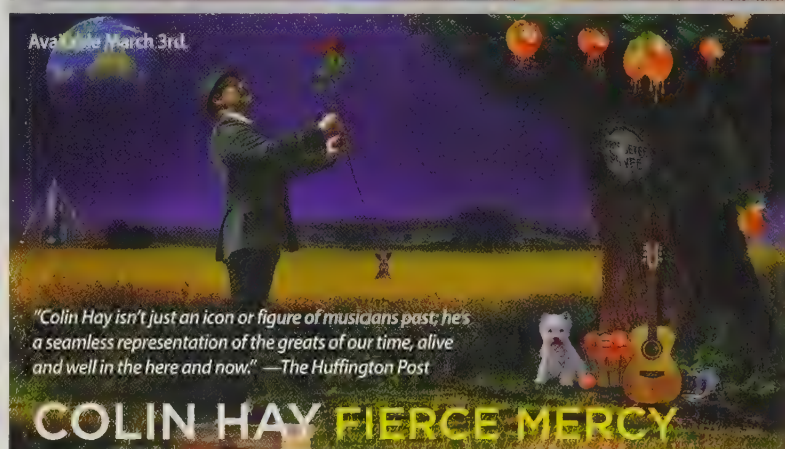
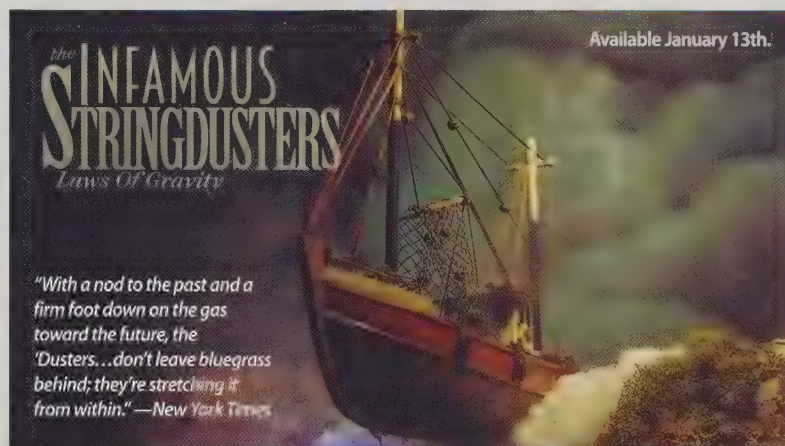
"Yeah, a circle, a family, an entire reality with everyone working together to create something, to propel each other. The idea is be able to play in every context and show up on a global scale."

If that sounds lofty, give the man a listen. If there is any justice—admittedly a toss-up—KaiL Baxley is the most impressive singer/songwriter I've heard in years. Don't count out this very serious contender...



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They go for raw, rollicking textures rather than the spit and polish of their many trad' peers.

By Sophie Parkes-Nield

I can hear footstep and chatter, car exhausts and door slams. Having been anointed “the authentic voice of the streets”, it’s almost fitting that singer and piper of Lynched, Ian Lynch, is roaming Dublin’s streets when he answers my call. Dublin has made him, has shaped his outlook, and Lynched is a natural reflection and contemplation of that experience—though the words reflection and contemplation are a bit of a misnomer.

The four-piece’s first album, *Cold Old Fire*, is a varied oddity, where unsettling eeriness brushes up against music hall showstoppers. And, happily for Ian, the band is attracting as varied an audience at home, too.

“Anyone from seven to 70,” he says, “punks through to old folkies.”

Which is no surprise given the band’s beginnings and leanings. Much has been made in the press about Lynched’s lengthy gestation: a duo with his brother, Daragh, begun in the early days of the Noughties, gigs in return for stew and beer at DIY affairs, occasional crossed-paths with traditionally honed musicians Radie Peat and Cormac Mac Diarmada. There was no plan, no decisive reason to make music or a preconceived manner in which to do it, just an outlet for the diverse influences the brothers were taking in and their subsequent reflexive expression.

“We’d grown up with lots of singing in the family; not traditional music, really, but songs from the ’50s and ’60s at family get-togethers. The odd folk song might creep in, but it was music hall, songs from the charts, songs from Dublin. We played in punk and metal bands in our teens, but I had this parallel interest in traditional music through bands like The Pogues, The Dubliners,” he says. “Lots of people pay lip service to traditional music in Ireland; they don’t listen properly. Planxty and The Bothy Band gave a route in.”

As Ian grew older, his interest in traditional

music grew with him and he began to seek out the lively, thriving session and singaround scene in his home city, before pursuing his interest academically, following a degree with a masters in Irish language and folklore.

“It was so welcoming, always so encouraging. When I wanted to find out more about the uilleann pipes, and I turned up at the piper club, Na Píobairí Uilleann, they didn’t mind that I was this freak with dreads and piercings.”

Radie and Cormac, on the other hand, were already stalwarts of the Irish traditional scene, having had instrumental lessons since they were small and attending the fleadh. As their teens approached, they discovered other, ‘weirder’ music, and the quartet gravitated toward one another, swapping songs and tunes.

“We were playing with Radie and Cormac informally, on and off, for years. We’d see them at sessions. Lynched was essentially just the two of us for 14 years but then we were offered some studio time,” Ian says. “Daragh and I were going to attempt *Daffodil Mulligan* and *Drinking Song From The Tomb* [both tracks on *Cold Old Fire*] and we thought that Radie and Cormac would be good, so we got them in. It

just went from there. We have no conscious idea of what the end product will be—it's organic, for want of a better word—and some songs take a week or some seven or eight months."

And it's the 'organic' that has reaped the kudos, securing them slots as diverse as a headline show at Ireland's famous Electric Picnic, Sidmouth Folk Week and *Later... With Jools Holland*. Lynched's raw, rollicking textures and vocals from the gut sees them at odds with the current, and continuing, trend for technically flawless traditional music, produced with polish. They're unusual—and welcome.

"I just want to make music that's accessible to people. Growing up outside folk music, it'd be great to let people in, much as the same way I found my way in," he says.

Though Ian spent considerable time working at the Irish Traditional Music Archive, the songs that Lynched choose are those that they hear sung by others.

"I find [the archives] fascinating, but singing sessions are the way we tend to pick up songs. We're always learning new songs. We've got a long list we want to work with, ever growing."

And to satiate their own appetite, much to the relief of their swelling fan base, the band will be back in the studio in late 2016, recording a new album for release "sometime next year".

Alongside new material, 2017 will also bring forth a new chapter for the band, taking on a new name from February. Though the band's name was originally derived from the two brothers' surname, there is no denying it has problematic connotations with which the band has become increasingly uncomfortable. In October 2016, and since this interview took place, the band released the statement:

'We will not continue to work under our current name while the systemic persecution and murder of Black people in the USA continues. We will complete all gigs booked under our current name until February 2017, after which we will be working under the name Lankum, which comes from the ballad *False Lankum*, as sung by Irish Traveller John Reilly Jr. As always, we will continue to stand in firm solidarity with oppressed, marginalised and displaced people, both here in Ireland and internationally.'

So, to 2017: a new album, a new name and, inevitably, a new, swelling fanbase.



100 mile house

Hiraeth

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JESSICA RHAYE

SONG IN ME



All You Need Is Love

100 Mile House transform personal tragedy into an exquisite album of constant poise and optimism. Words by **Roddy Campbell**



The Welsh language—the oldest in Britain—emerged around 4,000 years ago from a branch of Indo-Europeans now known locally as the Celts. As one might expect, after all these years, the Welsh developed a way with words—most of them impenetrable for those with no ear for the vernacular.

Take *Hiraeth*, for example, the title of the exquisitely crafted new 100 Mile House recording. While hiraeth has no direct English meaning, it translates comparatively as homesickness tinged with grief or sadness over the lost or departed—a mix of longing, yearning, and nostalgia.* As you will discover, how fitting a title for a disc that flows with such impeccable poise, virtue, and, at times, tragedy.

At the heart of this fourth release from the Edmonton-based, husband-and-wife team, Denise MacKay and Peter Stone, lie two deeply sad and yet beautiful, uplifting songs: *Last Branch* and *All We Have*, in which they reiterate their love for each other in the aftermath of a fateful pregnancy.

“One of the points of this album is to talk about, you know, the uncomfortable things that make you withdraw,” says Denise. “I have withdrawn a lot from the music community, my friends, family, everyone, because you feel isolated and you feel alone with a lot of this stuff. The thing is, there are a lot of people out there who are feeling exactly the same way. So, hopefully, even if one person hears [this record] and feels less alone, or finds comfort in it, [wonderful].”

“I’ve really been looking forward to this CD coming out because I feel like I’m ready to let these songs go. I’m ready for them to be out in the world. Some of them were hard to write or hard to sing.”

“We all have a story of where we came from,” says Peter, “but for some reason, when we begin to start our own families, everybody keeps to themselves miscarriages and stuff. There’s this thing where you don’t tell people [about a pregnancy] until after three months to keep [the baby] safe. I think, ‘Why have we always been told this? Why not share the sadness as well as the joy?’. You need more support with sadness than in moments of joy.”

From the grand opening statement of a short, haunting instrumental—oddly enough titled *Intro*—it’s soon abundantly clear that there is something wonderfully special proceeding. The production is impeccable, their singing warm and intimate, the quality of the material consistently beguiling, and all 13 tracks flow with a masterful, unifying meter. Top drawer, absolutely.

* Defined by The University of Wales, Lampeter.

We gather in a cozy Irish pub on the south side of Edmonton in mid-November for a natter. And the craic is good. Peter and I discover an unlikely alliance in our mutual support for Leyton Orient F.C.—an unpredictable English football team I watched on a regular basis when I lived in London at the fog end of the ’60s—as I prod and poke around the various elements included in *Hiraeth*, a word that startled Denise upon its discovery.

“I have a friend that posts a word of the day. As soon as I read it my stomach just sank.”

That initial sense of dread, of course, manifests itself in various guises throughout *Hiraeth*, most profoundly on the aforementioned *Last Branch* but juxtaposed with an uplifting sense of assurance: “*I promise that one day my dear / The fog will lift, the air will clear / And tiny feet will wander here*”.

Clearly a three-hankie affair, that one.

“I think the whole album is pretty melancholy,” says Peter, “but we tried to leave it with this hopeful feeling. *Lost Branch* is a situation we live in.”

“We recorded more upbeat tunes,” Denise clarifies. “But we asked ourselves, ‘Why are these on here? Why is a song on an album just because it’s a little bit different?’. Pete’s like, ‘Well, this album is so miserable (he laughs)’. We should have more upbeat songs because we recorded more upbeat tunes? But why? They don’t serve the whole album.”

And while there is an air of admirable melancholy on this recording, the clear white light of optimism shines throughout. How could you not love the simple yet profound sentiment of *Go Take Me*: “*And I will do my best to be / A man who’ll listen quietly*”?

Brighton Beach, however, provides the most intriguing melody on the whole album, with its harem-scarum pulse courtesy of their splendid fiddler and long-time collaborator Scott Zubot—cousin of Jesse Zubot of Zubot & Dawson renown.

“We kind of let Scott go to town



Photo By: Dwayne Martineau



Jesse Zubot, Denise Mackay and Peter Stone

Photo By: Bri Vos

Denise Mackay grew up in the tiny hamlet of Cardiff, just north of Edmonton, AB. Her dad hailed from P.E.I., so Stompin' Tom Connors and Johnny Cash records hardly left the family stereo. She took up French horn and percussion in high school, joined a jazz band as a drummer, but really, really wanted to be the singer. "I always loved to sing. I'd always try and sing the harmonies along with the radio. My brother would always yell at me from the back seat of the car, 'Why can't you just sing the normal notes'. That's been my favourite thing to do forever."

At 17, she left Cardiff for Edmonton and an English literature degree at the University of Alberta. Now sporting an

acoustic guitar, and underage, she frequently showed up at the various open mics run by the late, local actor, comedian, musician, and well-loved character Joe Bird. And there were other energizing factors around town.

"I first went to the [Edmonton] folk fest when I was 18. I was like, 'What have I been missing out on? These are my people! This is where I want to be!'"

Inspired by the likes of Ani DiFranco and Whiskeytown, Denise polished her songwriting to the point she felt confident enough to record a self-titled EP. "I only had five good songs. It's terrible."

"It's not terrible," Peter jumps in.

"I was very headstrong and very independent. Very independent. I just did whatever I wanted to do."

Clearly ambitious, Denise took off for Toronto in 2003. The week she arrived there, she met Peter. While their initial meeting has enjoyed a recital or two over the years in these very pages, bear with me. She, of course, showed up at his gig in the defunct Gorilla Monsoon on Queen Street, thinking it was an open mic. All the same, he politely shared the stage with her. And here's the lovely twist: Peter's father was over from England and

videotaped the whole show.

"So the moment we met is actually on camera," laughs Denise. "We watched it once and it was just so embarrassing. We were both so awkward about it. It was pretty funny."

Born in the East End of London, Peter Stone grew up on Elk Road, "just wide enough for one car to drive down". On Saturdays, he and his dad supported the Orient. Such details are important down that way. His parents also encouraged his musical abilities. He took up piano at age seven and then electric guitar four years later. His grandfather played boogie-woogie piano in local pubs and acted as a mentor of sorts. Thin Lizzy, though, provided his initial musical inspiration.

"Thin Lizzy, there was so much poetry in the lyrics. I really enjoyed when *Dancing In The Moonlight* came around. This song changed my mind a little bit when I was 13 because these scenes of stories about going to parties and falling in love, I was like, 'Yeah!'. I always manage to talk about Thin Lizzy at some point," he laughs.

on that one, and Pete took all of his takes and chopped them up and put them all together."

"Scott, he's definitely our third voice," says Peter. "I came up with the structure in the chords and just used some terrible sounds off my computer. I was like, 'This could be a song'. And then Scott came around and started. And I was like, 'It's definitely a song now'. He was doing all these crazy things. I don't know how he gets some of the sounds he does. He's like a wizard. And he just comes in and does it, doesn't even think about it."

Denise and Scott first met as teenagers in Edmonton. He would back her at various open-mic stages. And when Zubot & Dawson came through town they attended all of their shows. They all kept in touch and Steve Dawson puts in a journeyman appearance on pedal steel guitar on *You Feel Like Home*.

"We sent him a message, says Peter, 'We have this song you might be interested in'. He was recording in the studio and he sent us three takes of the whole song. And that was it."

To spice things up on this new 100 Mile House disc, they concede they forced themselves to add new instruments. Besides Dawson's pedal steel, they added Scenic Route To Alaska's drummer Shea Connor and their bass man Murray Wood, as well as local lad Jason Kodie and his glorious accordion.

"That was my call," says Denise.

"It was," chimes in Peter enthusiastically. "Denise always makes these calls. At first I'm not sure. But I'm always, 'We've got to try it', because I want someone else to have ideas. And it's always a great idea. Like on our last album [*Wait With Me*] there's a song *London*: 'We should put a different instrument on here. What should we do?'. And Denise suggested a cello, and I was like, 'OK, I'm not sure'. And we put cello on it and it's perfect. You always do that...I didn't write a song that I liked until I met Denise."

"I'm a genius."



100 mile house wait with me



100 mile house hollow ponds



Photo By: Dwayne Martineau

As a student at Staffordshire University taking sound technology, he got drunk one night with a friend who spent a semester at Ryerson in Toronto. Said friend convinced him to try Canada. The following day, Peter made plans and told his parents. In Canada hardly a month, his grandfather died and he returned home for the funeral. A small inheritance awaited and he bought an acoustic Fender with a cutaway body. A rather unique guitar, he thought. When Denise showed up in Toronto, she had the exact same model. Go figure!

They would marry in 2004 and spent the summer in Edmonton. And let it be known that they queued very early one morning for tickets to hear Ani DiFranco at the city's annual folk festival extravaganza.

"The festivals I went to were kind of like Glastonbury," says Peter. "You camped and got drunk all weekend and listened to loud rock music. Edmonton was my first folk festival. So when we queued up at five in the morning to go to the Edmonton folk festival—we were third row to see Ani DiFranco. And I was like, 'What is this?'. It was completely different. I remember it so well. She's a force of nature. She's one of those performers where it feels like something bigger is coming from the person. What is she, 5' 2" or something? She's a powerhouse."

From late 2004 to 2008, they spent most of their time in London while Peter finished his courses.

"When I went to university, the whole idea, literally, was to learn to record our own stuff, to save money."

They made an EP, *On That Organ, In The House, In The Field* (2008), mainly for promo. Three of the songs ended up on their first album *From Fall To Fall* (2009) and another on *Hollow Pond* (2011). Yet, they struggled to find gigs in London.

"It was tough, though," says Denise. "There was so much music, so many places to play. But to get any sort of traction? I don't know how anybody does it over there. In Edmonton there is maybe two or three things going on a night. There, there are probably 50. And you can go to 50 different places and hear 200 different bands. How do you even start? We tried. We'd a couple of successful little shows."

"But we played our first gig when we came back to Edmonton and made more money at that one gig than we did in our entire four years in London. Not that it's about the money, but to put it in perspective. Some places in London you would have a night and if you didn't bring

five people you had to pay the promoter. Or the first 10 people that you brought, the money went to the promoter. After that you got £1 a person."

"We were learning what to do, kind of thing," says Peter. "We were learning how to write as well. I feel like [London] made us appreciate coming here more."

Once settled in Edmonton, they soon entrenched themselves in the local music community. They released *From Fall To Fall*, which gave them a fair bit of exposure farther afield. And to think they recorded it in their apartment behind a couch in order to balance the sound.

"It was fun," says Denise. "We play a lot of these songs still."

All the same, each subsequent recording, *Hollow Ponds* and *Wait With Me* (2013), revealed a measured maturity. Both are well dealt with in *Penguin Eggs* No. 54 and No. 58. Which all brings us nicely back to *Hiraeth*—the first album they recorded outside of their home studio, The Bird-Shop. Not that they strayed far. The Audio Department, they assure me, is a nine-minute walk from their apartment—far enough to clear the head on the way home. Peter works there occasionally for the manager Terry Tran, who also engineered *Hiraeth*.

"Because we had Terry engineer it, it freed us up to perform and produce as much as we wanted. It was nice to have the pressure off, to get good sounds. I don't know any place in Edmonton that can compete with the equipment. They've got some amazing stuff there."

And god bless their cotton socks for keeping the faith and making real records in these trying times when artists' economic ability to make memorable new albums is continuously undermined by Spotify, Sound Cloud, iTunes, Pandora...or whatever other box these digital monsters crawled out of.

"I've talked to a lot of people who think albums are dead," says Denise. "'There's no point. Do EPs. Do singles. You don't have to record a whole album'. But I think there is something about having a collection of songs that fit together. You can't get the same feeling from an EP or a single. A collection of songs that belong together, I think it's important."

And take it from me, dear reader, you can include *Hiraeth* in that assessment.



Christy Moore

The Penguin Eggs Interview

Christy Moore is an institution. A national treasure in Ireland. An international treasure everywhere else. Was there ever a time when he wasn't among us, singing his ballads, bantering with audiences, sending chills down your spine with political invective one minute and having you dancing on chairs with singalong choruses the next?

He's had his trials, of course. Illness, struggles with alcohol, disputes with band members, battles with the establishment, controversy, and even, on occasion, arguments with audiences who haven't taken kindly to his opinions or being berated for inappropriate hand-clapping.

But from his earliest days when he left his job in the bank in the west of Ireland to come to England and work the folk club scene as a roustabout solo artist; to the epochal band Planxty with his school friend Donal Lunny, Andy Irvine, and Liam O'Flynn; to fronting the groundbreaking jazz-folk-rock big band Moving Hearts; and on to a more sophisticated yet no less passionate, committed, and edgy solo career, latterly in the company of exquisite guitarist Declan Sinnott, he has been one of

the folk music world's most enduring and best-loved artisans in a 50-year career with at least 30 solo albums to his name.

Nobody, just nobody, communicates with audiences quite like Christy Moore. Whether he's singing unaccompanied, playing his bodhran, belting out a big chorus, doing some of his impromptu scat rap, delivering one-liners like a standup comedian, or just musing gently about a song or a situation, it's as if there's an invisible umbilical cord connecting him and his audience. An indelible magic fills any stage he occupies.

He's not been so visible globally in recent years. He has scaled down his touring to the point that he rarely ventures beyond Ireland or the U.K. to play these days, but he's still vigorously active, writing and collating songs, casting a frequently critical, sometimes amused eye on the world, and still making fine, fine music.

His latest album, *Lily*, embodies politics, nostalgia, history, love, and poetry, including songs by Peter Gabriel (*Wallflower*), John Spillane (*Ballad Of Patrick Murphy*), Declan

O'Rourke (*Lightning Bird, Wind, River Man*) and the track that's received the most attention, Mick Blake's *Oblivious*, a seething analysis of what he perceives as betrayal of the ideals that drove freedom fighters during the 1916 Easter Rising.

Questions by Colin Irwin

How the devil are you, Christy?

All is well. Still chasing the songs...

The new album, *Lily*. What do you reckon? Still like it?

The songs are settling into the live set slowly but surely...I've gigged them all by now apart from *Lost Tribe* [a spoken-word track based on a Dave Lordan poem, *Lost Tribe Of The Wicklow Mountains*].

Can you evaluate your own work? How do you think it fits into your wider career?

Sure, I can evaluate what I do but only from

this side of the fence. No one hears the songs as I hear them. It's a very personal and intimate relationship that some singers have with songs...there are songs that I love very dearly, that I love to sing... yet some of them have never clicked in the live set...now I simply sing them to myself in my work room.

Did you have a plan of campaign for this one in assembling the material or did it all just fall into place?

No plan nor campaign. When I had gathered 17 songs together I decided it was time to record...in the arranging, rehearsing, and recording, a certain atmosphere began to emerge. It all fell into place in the mixing.

What are the key tracks for you and why?

Don't have that yet. I believe that all 10 tracks will find their way onto the permanent set menu...time alone will tell if there are 'key tracks'. There have been albums along the way where not one track remained. Other albums provided many songs that survive in the ongoing set list.

What is your history with the Peter Gabriel song *Wallflower* and why did you choose it?

Declan Sinnott suggested I listen to it. I got it immediately. I had attempted two Peter Gabriel songs in earlier years but could not do them justice. I chose *Wallflower* for its subject matter. Peter Gabriel has written a song about things we seldom hear of in song. Apart from that, it is a great song to sing.

Were there any problems arranging and adapting the Mick Blake song *Oblivious*?

No problems. Mick Blake gave me free rein. Sometimes I need to adjust a song to make it fit my awkward shape. Other times I sense an audience failing to grasp a lyric. When that happens I will try and consult the writer. I have made a number of alterations to Mick's lyric and it seems to be fitting well of late.

On the album you have excluded one of the most potent verses in the original song... 'Imagine a nation where people are free'... Any particular reason for leaving it out?

I have since put it back in. It's an important song and I wanted to make it audible, palatable, tighter.

What emotions did you feel about the events marking the centenary of the Easter Rising?

I felt there was a ridiculous amount of cynical bandwaggoning. Also a number of fitting commemorations.

How are you feeling about Ireland right now? The world? Optimistic? Or, er, not?

I honestly believe that the world is fucked.

Is it difficult finding new songs that are suitable for being 'Christy-fied'? What are the qualities you look for?

It's a matter of taking the time to search, to listen, to uncover...I have never been a prolific songwriter. Some might say, 'Phew! Thank God for that', I have relied upon other writers sharing their songs with me. I have always searched the archives. I go to singing sessions and love the company of other singers. I'm happy to report that there is a great upsurge in trad singing circles here in Ireland, but you gotta suss them out.

There are lots of good, young musicians coming out of Dublin at the moment. Lynched. Daoiri Farrell. Does this help to inspire you?

Yes. These young rascals keep an old boy on his toes!

You played Pink Floyd's *Shine On You Crazy Diamond* at Cambridge Folk Festival the other day. That was a surprise. Have you done it live before?

I've done it a few times, but only when the room feels right. I recorded it a few years back.

Have you mellowed as you have got older?

I hope not. I do find it more difficult to climb atop the barricade but I hope to continue singing behind it.

Do you ever get nostalgic?

I am forever 'crossing the River Liffey bridge and walking up the town'.

Do you have many regrets about your career? Would you do much differently if you had your time again?

I regret not learning to play the guitar properly. I developed bad habits in 1962 that still stifle my ability to chord.

Are there any songs you wish you'd never recorded?

The Bunch of Thyme.

Do you still love recording and performing or do you have to give yourself a stiff talking to?

I am enjoying gigs now more than at any time in my life. They have become very precious to me. I'm hoping to achieve Tony Bennett's longevity!.

How important is Declan Sinnott to you musically these days?

Declan is a true companero. Despite being primarily a guitar player, he is also a songster. Working with me, he sees his main purpose to support the song. He is the only guitar player I know who will say, 'This song doesn't need a guitar break'. There are songs in my repertoire that I could not have sung without Declan's input.

Name one song you wish you had written.

Happy Birthday.

One artist alive or dead you'd love to meet/perform/write with?

Bruce Springsteen.

So what are your plans for the future? DO you plan for the future?

A decent mug of tea and sleep in my own bed. By the way, I love the name of this magazine. *Penguin Eggs* is one of my fave songs by one of my fave singers ever. Nic Jones... without doubt, the best song accompanist I have ever heard.

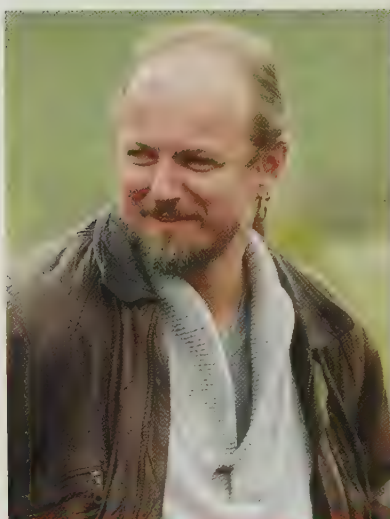
Thanks, Christy—we managed to get through this without one question about Planxty!

I'm grateful for that. Planxty was a truly wonderful time in my life. Fifty years on the road this year. Three years with Planxty. Two years with the Hearts. I loved my time with Planxty and the Hearts, but I had to move on...

Reviews



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The Fretless

Bird's Nest (Independent)



Violinist and founder member Ivonne Hernandez has now moved on so The Fretless is now Trent Freeman (fiddle, viola), Karrnel Sawitsky (fiddle, viola), Eric Wright (cello), and Ben Plotnick (fiddle, viola).

Not much else has changed, though they are still peddling their unique and wacky brand of string band/quartet music they classify as 'progressive chamber trad'. There are the usual unusual time signatures, stylistic shifts and an eclectic range of influences.

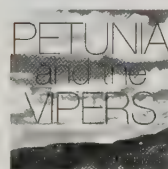
Alphonzo McKenzie's *Salkantay* kicks the album off at a canter, with the fiddle briskly surging ahead, while the backing strings lay down a dense rhythmic chord pattern.

They manage to keep the impetus of the tunes going throughout the whole album, while constantly surprising the listener. The Fretless continue to build a bridge between classical and folk music without ever being over-earnest or stuffy. That, my friends, is what makes them special!

— By Tim Readman

Petunia & The Vipers

Dead Bird On The Highway (Independent)



As with any musical movement, the rise of so many old-time revivalist groups requires an artist that is as committed to advancing the form as they are to treating the classic forms with reverence. There may be no artist in Canada who exemplifies this dichotomy as well as Vancouver's Petunia, and his band The Vipers.

Petunia keeps his compositions tight to classic country and blues forms while also embracing the nascent jazz tradition of the 1920s, resulting in smart songs that provide his crack band ample space to add interesting melodic ideas that push the boundaries of genre restrictiveness, while Petunia's mid-range vocal cuts through the mix like a vibrato-inflected baritone saxophone, trembling and burning through arrangements both upbeat and foreboding.

Kicking off with the Dixieland jump blues of *Blue Yodel Blues*, Petunia runs the band through a classic 1-4-5 while trumpeter Jack Garton, lap steel guitarist Jimmy Roy, and guitarist Stephen Nikleva

at one moment harmonize, before passing the lines back and forth, conjuring a jubilant New Orleans second line feel while Petunia puts on his Singing Brakeman chapeau, once again breaking through a thick groove with a high and lonesome moan to wake the dead.

Surf and rockabilly elements abound throughout *Dead Bird On The Highway*, showing the full dexterity of a band whose skills are constantly evident, but whose identity is clearly defined by their enigmatic leader.

The darker elements on *Dead Bird On The Highway* deserve a

close listen.

Petunia & The Vipers, along with co-producer Steve Loree, have put together a record that pushes the boundaries of the "Dustbowl Chic" scene, and ought to be regarded as a high-water mark for Canadian folk music this year.

— By Michael Dunn

John Renbourn & Wizz Jones

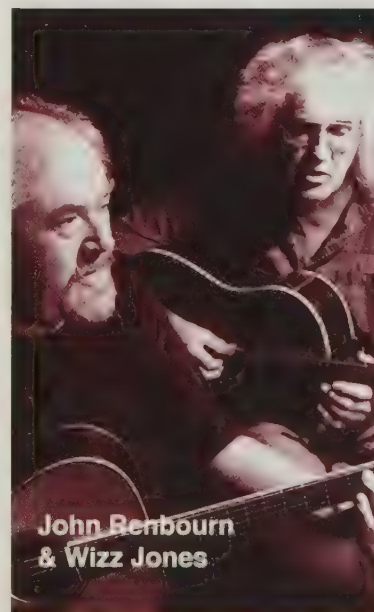
Joint Control (Riverboat Records)



Two emperors of English acoustic guitarishness recording together (properly) for the first time. The vibe of the record very much reminds me of another (much older) collaboration: Pete Townshend and Ronnie Lane's *Rough Mix*.

Both records have a similarly relaxed, nothing-to-prove feel, and both sound very much of the '70s (*Rough Mix* is from the '70s, *Joint Control* just sounds like it). Both records are also the product of strong friendships between the players and sound like much fun was had in the playing.

On *Joint Control* its set-your-controls-to-the-heart-of-the-blues:



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Album of the Year, 2016 - Penguin Eggs

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There's a new train roaring
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Big Bill Broonzy's *Hey Hey*, Mose Allison's *Getting There*, and Joseph Spence's *Great Dream From Heaven*, to name three. There's intricate finger-picking, laid-back vocals, and laughter from both players, and some Jansch and Jones originals. Plus Dylan's *Buckets Of Rain* and Billy Hill's *Glory Of Love*. Sadly, Renbourn died shortly after *Joint Control* was recorded but the record stands as a fitting testament to a lifelong friendship and two originals from the '60s folk scene.

— By Richard Thornley

Red Tail Ring

Fall Away Blues (Independent)



Someone once said that the value of Bach wasn't just in the music itself but in all the things that people do with the music. They learn with it, play with it; they engage with the concepts there, and then take them away to apply them elsewhere. And, yes, you can listen to it, too.

The same is true of Appalachian folk song. The songs we associate with Appalachia have legs in the same way that Bach's music does: people learn with it, play it, sing it, engage with the concepts, and apply the concepts all over the place.

So much of the joy of the music comes from that process, and is also responsible for so much of the joy contained within this latest release from Red Tail Ring titled *Fall Away Blues*.

Throughout, the two Michiganders, Michael Beauchamp and Laurel Premo, pick up the forms of Appalachian song and—quietly, respectfully—have an absolute ball. It doesn't jump up and bite you in the face, but it's there.

The movement between the

major and minor in *The New Homeplace* is scintillating. The drones are so careful, so kind, they become like a prayer. Yes, they're updating things, too, but they do it in such a sympathetic way. Some might listen here and think it's all nostalgia, but it's not. This is modern music, and that's what makes what Beauchamp and Premo so worth our while. They don't update by giving us something instead of. Rather, they give us something in addition to.

This is old-time music, yes, though the name is unfortunate. It's a link in a great, playful, wonderful chain of North American song.

— By Glen Herbert

The Harmonic Tone Revelers

The Harmonic Tone Revelers (Corvus Records)



So here I am at my computer, listening to Cousin Sally Brown at half speed for the umpteenth time, attempting to perfect another John Reischman solo. Not just the notes, but the tone. My god, the tone. Reischman could play barbed wire and make it sound good. Sharon Gilchrist's mandolin solo on *My Father's Footsteps* is another on the learn list, and we haven't even gotten to Scott Nygaard's guitar solos, so perfect in phrasing and interpretation that is his alone.

Aptly titled *The Harmonic Tone Revelers*, this outstanding release features Reischman on mandolin and mandola, Nygaard on guitar, and Gilchrist on mandolin and bass, performing new interpretations of a dozen familiar and obscure instrumentals, mostly from the bluegrass and Appalachian old-time fiddle worlds. A great recording for all who love perfectly executed acoustic music.

Players' alert: Reischman will join the roster of instructors in 2017 on Nygaard's Peghead Nation instructional site, featuring monthly lessons by Nygaard, Gilchrist, and 20 top acoustic musicians.

— By Bob Remington

Cori Brewster

Four Horses (Shadow Lake Music)



On her latest five-song EP, Canmore's Cori Brewster co-writes with

Ian Tyson on *Western Skyline* and JR Shore on *Let The Wild Horses Run*, and performs with John Wort Hannam on *Canadian Rye*. Roots rocker Leeroy Stagger plays guitar on the sessions. The disc, despite the collaborations, is centred firmly on Brewster's voice and the history of the Banff/Canmore area, and her family history as well (*Canadian Rye* is about her father, cowboy and Banff character Bud Brewster, and *Bad Medicine*, though inspired by John Reilly's same-titled book, has her grandfather as a character in it.). Brewster has been part of the Canadian country music industry since 1994, both on her own and with Maria Dunn and Jennifer Gibson in the Sonic Sisters. Like most EPs, though, it just whets the appetite, leaving the listener wanting the full-meal deal of a new album.

— By Barry Hammond



Natalie MacMaster & Donnell Leahy

A Celtic Family Christmas (Linus)



What could be more Canadian than a ceilidh Christmas album from two of

Canada's finest Celtic fiddlers, Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy, along with their children and musician friends?

Only seconds into the first track, *Angels We Have Heard On High*, the pace quickens from a simple solo piano start to dual fiddling, followed by the rest of the band with foot-tapping joyous rhythms, and sheer glee.

The album continues with an energetic Celtic spin on tunes such as *Up On The Housetop*, *Hark The Herald Angels Sing*, *The Twelve Days Of Christmas*, *Little Drummer Boy*, *What Child Is This*, *Ding Dong Merrily On High*, *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*, and *Silent Night*. *White Christmas* gets a jazzy, Stéphane Grappelli treatment.

With excellent vocals from the kids (and their mom and dad), the rest of the band includes Mark Kelso on drums; Time Edey on guitars and accordion; Mac Morin on piano; Nathaniel Smith on cello; Mac MacIsaac on pipes; whistle, and guitar; Pat Kilbride on bass; plus guests.

If you've tired of soporific shopping-mall Christmas music and need something real, this is the album for you. Highly recommended.

— By Gene Wilburn



Emily Smith

Songs For Christmas (White Fall Records)



Contemporary Christmas recordings usually have the shelf life of brie. Notable exceptions are rare: The Chieftains' *Bells of Dublin*, Emmylou Harris's *Light of the Stable*, Kate and Anna McGarrigle's *The McGarrigle Christmas Hour*.... And now the splendid Scottish singer Emily Smith makes a case for similar stature with her *Songs For Christmas*. While it mixes the secular with the spiritual, the familiar with the unusual, she's obviously done her homework elegantly embracing the old Negro spiritual *Heard From Heaven Today* as well as gorgeously readdressing Battlefield Band's adaptation of *Christ Has My Hairt*, Ay. While *The Blessings of Mary* offers a

syncopation that recalls the best of The Easy Club, *Santa Will Find You* is a bit of a stocking stuffer. *Little Road To Bethlehem*, however, skips along to some fine country fiddling courtesy of Jamie McClellan. That fascination with Americana also shows up on *A Life That Is Good*. With a little luck, it could easily generate country crossover interest. Then there's *The Parting Glass*, done proper justice here, I'll tell you. All in all, a recording truly worthy of a toast or two. Slàinte.

— By Roddy Campbell

Various Artists

Christmas On The Lam and Other Songs

From the Season (Red House Records)



Variety is the key on this holiday collection from Red House Records

in Minnesota. You've got good rockin' R&B with Davina & The Vagabonds' version of *Santa Bring My Baby Back (To Me)*, blues both roadhouse style and acoustic in *Santa Claus Wants Some Lovin'* by Bill Kitchen & Austin de Lone, and title track Slim Tall's *Christmas On The Lam* by Charlie Parr.

Heather Masse and her band get into a gently swinging groove with one of the best tracks on the collection (*Mittens*), which has some divine harmony singing between her and Aoife O'Donovan, the lilting piano of Jed Wilson, and hot, jazzy guitar picking by Lyle Brewer, which even elicits shouts from the other musicians by the end of the track.

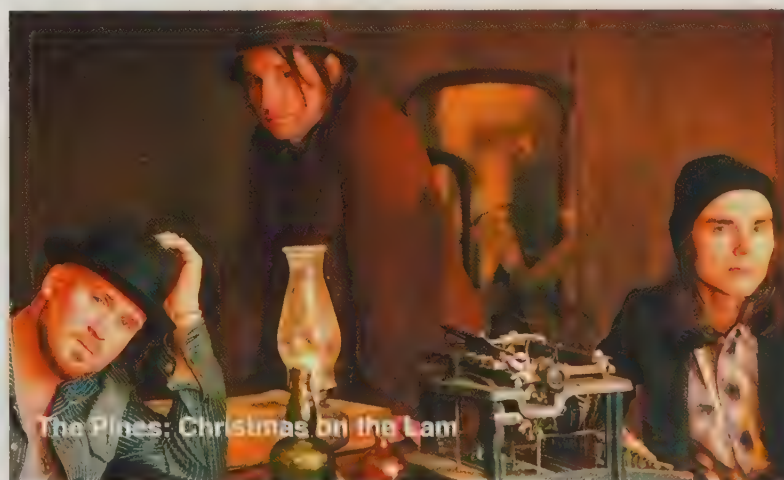
You've got steel guitar-driven country from Suzzy Roche backed by Loudon Wainwright, Jules Shear, and David Mansfield on *Cold Hard Wind*. Dale Watson delivers his Johnny Cash-style track *Christmas To Me*, while The Pines pull off a nice cover of Gordon Lightfoot's *Song For A Winter's Night*.

Also in a country vein is Larry Campbell & Teresa Williams's version of the classic *Blue Christmas*. One of the nicest treats is The Wailin' Jennys' original *Glory Bound*, which sounds like an old-timey hymn. Mixed into these highlights are other strong tracks from John Gorka, Robin & Linda Williams, and Jorma Kaukonen. It's an off-beat, alternative collection that'll swing your holidays in fine style.

— By Barry Hammond



Donnell Leahy and Natalie MacMaster



The Pines: Christmas on the Lam

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Various Artists

The Ultimate Guide To English Folk (ARC)



Calling anything an "ultimate guide" is doomed from the start, but this is a pretty

amazing collection of 35 songs dating from the early '60s to the last few months and the kicker is the inclusion of copious liner notes by former Bellowhead lead singer/fiddler Jon Boden.

Not having the actual CD, I was blessed with the download of a PDF file of these notes. I'm quite certain the type would be way too small for the human eye—especially mine!

So, how do you choose 35 songs from the past 55 years? In a sense, it doesn't much matter what you choose; this is just a "guide" and anyone enthralled by a song or an artist can then explore the music further using iTunes or YouTube or even Spotify (although I doubt the latter would carry much music by artists on the older cuts in this collection.)

Significant tracks include Martin Carthy's *Scarborough Fair*, which was famously co-opted by one Paul Simon in the '60s and which act of piracy was rewarded by a court finding in Carthy's favour and awarding him I think it may have been as little as a penny in compensation! (The ruling was framed and held pride of place above a toilet in Martin's house for many years. I believe he and Simon have since made up!)

Any album that also includes Nic Jones's stunning *Canadee-I-O*—this one 40 years on from

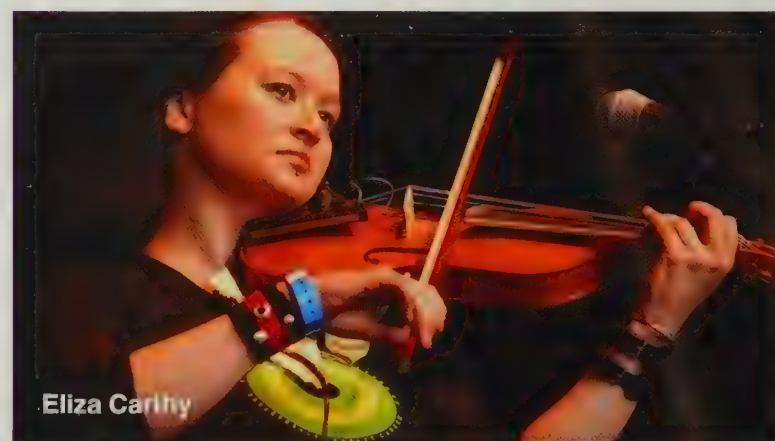
the original album, which gave title to this very magazine—gets my vote as an "ultimate guide". Dylan covered this 20 some years ago. Jones's voice and strident guitar work have never sounded better.

It is inevitable that some artists would appear on several tracks (Carthy with Brass Monkey and Waterson:Carthy; Martin Simpson solo and with June Tabor; Jon Boden with Bellowhead and in duo with John Spiers; Eliza Carthy solo and with Waterson:Carthy, etc.) and Steeleye Span, Oysterband, The Unthanks, and Show of Hands are notable inclusions.

Curiously, there are no cuts from Fairport Convention nor any of their alumni. This can't be just a glaring omission; must be an opinionated exclusion, methinks, or maybe a copyright problem. Pity, really, especially since the recent passing of Dave Swarbrick. Nice to hear Anne Briggs, Fay Hield, Kate Rusby, and Jackie Oates alongside Peter Bellamy, Blowzabella and a scratchy old recording of Joseph Taylor from more than 100 years ago.

I definitely recommend this collection to anyone who wants to investigate the rich heritage of English folk music, and who hasn't already collected works by many of the most esteemed purveyors of this tradition—from Copper Family and Watsons to contemporary wonders such as Leveret, Jim Moray, and Sam Lee.

Definitely not the "ultimate guide" I might have chosen, but I don't have anywhere near the depth of knowledge of Mr.



Eliza Carthy

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Boden—nor would I have the time or ability to write such detailed essays. Give this man an honorary PhD from Oxford or Cambridge, I say!

— By Steve Edge

NUA

Flow (Independent)



NUA are a trio from Toronto: fiddler James Law, plectrum player Graeme McGilivray, and bodhran player Jacob McCauley. All skilled, feted, and inspired players in their own right, it's hardly surprising that as a trio they're pretty darned exciting.

Flow is their second release after 2014's *Bold*. Musically, it hews to the same path—original Irish and Scottish-inspired tunes with fresh and surprising influences from other traditions. For example, *Wide Open* has a subtly jazzish backdrop while *Wasabi*, with its staccato bodhran and guitar, could, in other hands (think Hoven Droven), have been a major head-banger.

But there's also plenty of trad feel here and obviously a great love for that side of things as well. If your ears aren't already tuned to the 'Irtrad' then there are better places to dive into it, perhaps; but if you're a devotee already, you'll be wanting to keep an eye (and an ear) on these three.

— By Richard Thornley

Chip Taylor

Little Brothers (Train Wreck Records)



It's perfectly reasonable for a person entering their later years to wax nostalgic, to recall their youth fondly and perhaps even see the future through the precocious accomplishments of their heirs.

With his warm, reedy voice, veteran songwriter Chip Taylor brings a mellow feel to the affair on *Little Brothers*, mostly accompanied by a tidily picked acoustic guitar, with stately piano



and groovy Wurlitzer prominent throughout the album. Taylor speak-sings through the verses, on simple melodies that highlight the ideas in his verses, from the plight of refugee children, through the beauty of old love, to the sorts of hard knocks only young men as brothers can bestow upon each other. The warmth of the recording feels like old friends sitting around in the front room, with Taylor's breaths audible in the mix.

Lyricaly though, *Little Brothers* is a fairly simplistic effort, with the sorts of inspirational messages that one would imagine finding on the flowery painted walls of a suburban housewife.

Little Brothers is meant to be a part of a trilogy, and Taylor may be better suited going back to the tight pop song craft that characterized his work in the past, better to truly express the feeling of looking back on a life lived so remarkably.

— By Michael Dunn

Stephen Fearing

Every Soul's A Sailor (Lowden Proud)



You don't get to be one of Canada's finest tunesmiths by repeating yourself, so it's a pleasure to report that veteran Stephen Fearing is still stretching his sounds and vocals on this ninth solo outing.

Could it be an offshoot of hanging with Blackie and the Rodeo Kings (and using the BARK rhythm section), moving across the country, or the help of producer David Travers Smith, who has a talent for casting artists in a fresh light? Either way, they fashion a set of hip tracks and some subtly spare pop treatments to surprise.

It gets going in the alluring groove and seesaw vocal of *Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is*, and a biting take on Trump's election campaign on the roots-rocker *Blowhard Nation*. Check his quirky humour pondering gener-



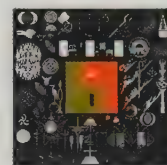
ations in *The Things We Did*, or *Love Like Water*, with its off-kilter guitar solo. Fearing's ballads and love songs fill it out with space to reflect and revel.

Clearly, this sailor hasn't lost his interest in challenging himself.

— By Roger Levesque

Bon Iver

22, A Million (Jagjaguwar)



As challenging as it is forward-thinking, Bon Iver's third full-length release, *22, A Million*, sees Justin Vernon exponentially expanding the electronic leanings that defined the second half of his sophomore album, and leaving sharp song craft by the wayside in favour of esoteric atmospherics, punctuated by large amounts of synthesizer, and vocals effected to the point of incomprehension.

The results of Vernon's electronic experimentation are a far cry from his earlier work in the vanguard of this decade's nascent alt-folk scene, and perhaps that's the idea here. *22, A Million* is experimental work, building upon layers of effects through the first three tracks before the lead single, *33 "GOD"*, makes its appearance with any sense of form or structure.

The album often seems like it wasn't meant to win over any new fans, while it's quite possible that his longtime listeners, who may have had different expectations for his latest, may be alienated by this direction. Much like the back end of David Bowie's *Low*, *22, A Million* feels like a deliberate transformation of what endeared Bon Iver to audiences in the first place, with the expectation that their tastes evolve and follow whichever path he sees fit.

His skills with melody and outside thinking are on full display here, as on the more recognizable Bon Iver of *29 #Strafford APTS* and *666*. The hieroglyphic nature of the song titles ought to be mentioned at this point, as this

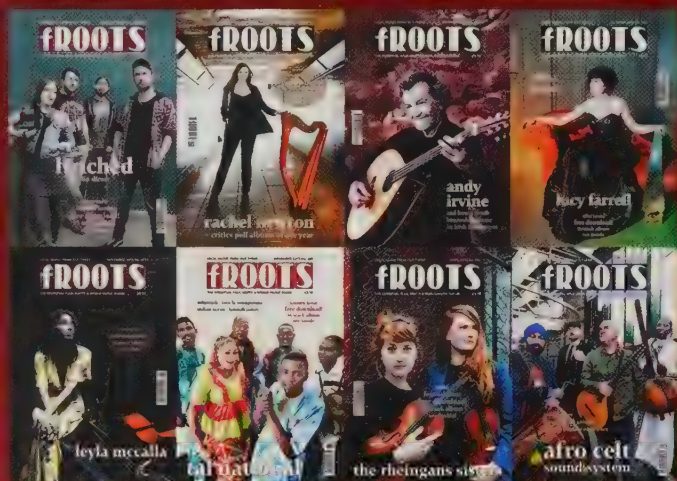


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stylistic choice not only provides a challenge to read the names of these songs, but to speak them aloud. While certainly an artistic statement of some kind, it comes off as ostentatious, an example of an artist drinking his or her own genius-flavoured Kool-Aid.

No doubt there are listeners who will herald Bon Iver's third album as "groundbreaking, the sound of the future", less because they believe it than because it's what they think they're supposed to believe to be taken seriously in conversations with very smart people. If true artistry is measured in making audiences question the work, and what, if anything, the artwork makes them feel, then 22, *A Million* is a resounding success.

— By Michael Dunn

Blackie and the Rodeo Kings

Kings And Kings. (File Under: Music)



There's nary a clunker to be found on Blackie and the Rodeo Kings's ninth release, which sees compadres Tom Wilson, Colin Linden, and Stephen Fearing making good use of their now wired in Nashville connections. The conceptual followup to 2011's *Kings And Queens* (which featured such notables as Exene Cervenka and Emmylou Harris on guest vocals) has the Blackie crew working with a range of male vocalists, including Raul Malo, Vince Gill, and current country music sweetheart Jason Isbell.

Isbell's offering, *Land Of The Living* (Hamilton Ontario 2016), is a slow burner as graceful as the title is clunky, while Keb' Mo's measured take on the quasi gospel *Long Walk To Freedom* is an album deep cut that grows in feeling on repeated listening.

Stephen Fearing and Andy White's *Secret Of A Long Lasting Love* sounds almost like it was tailored for Nick Lowe's arch delivery, while The Men of Nashville trade verses on the

rocking *Where The River Flows*. The Canadian contingent (City and Colour, Fantastic Negrito, and Bruce Cockburn) all acquit themselves admirably, but it might be Vince Gill who steals the show with *This Lonesome Feeling*.

— By Tom Murray

Rory Block

Keepin' Outta Trouble: A Tribute To Bukka White (Stony Plain Records)



Country blues guitarist Rory Block returns with the latest in her Mentor Series of tributes to her early musical influences, this time focusing on slide guitar legend Bukka White.

She does this by covering a few of his songs (*Aberdeen Mississippi Blues*, *Parchman Farm Blues*, *Panama Limited*) in and amongst her own compositions, which focus on White's life.

Block is a skilled and subtle player, and a distinctive, throaty vocalist able to navigate White's most famous songs without sounding too faithful to the source recordings. Block's own compositions wander off the pure blues form at times, tangling with bongos and plastic tubs (also played by Block), giving them a loose, pleasant feel, history lessons dressed up in casual narrative and acoustic licks.

Not all of it sticks with the power of White's own songs, but when Block winds it up on *Bukka's Day* she comes damn close.

— By Tom Murray



Rory Block

Morten Alfred Høirup, Kristian Bugge, Sonnich Lydom

Gangspil—extreme luxury folk! (GO! Danish)



Put on your Danish dancing shoes! The Gangspil crew is here with “extreme luxury folk” to sweep you off your feet and into the rich world of traditional folk dance music from Denmark.

The trio of Morten Alfred Høirup (guitar, vocals), Kristian Bugge (fiddle), and Sonnich Lydom (accordions, harmonica), draws from the rich repertoire of hand-written tune books found in the online Danish Folk Archives collection. Some of this material dates back to the 1700s, and one gets the impression that the musicians capture the spirit of the original repertoire and time.

“Drop the needle” anywhere in this collection and you’ll find a memorable tune. *Lyngbjerg Hopsa* moves along at a clip, with a surprise tune change and modulation along the way. For those who prefer a slower pace, the tender accordion feature *Duetto* wraps up what is an otherwise energetic song set.

Regardless of the tempo, the musicianship of this sympatico trio is impeccable. A great introduction and treasure trove for anyone interested in Danish or international folk dance music.

— By Barry Livingston

The Shee

Continuum (Independent)



Time flies when you are enjoying yourself! Can it really be 10 years since the women of this British folk group got together? To celebrate, each member approached one of their British folk mentors/idols, and asked him and her to write a new song or instrumental for The Shee. The results are impressive.

Among those who responded are Kathryn Tickell and Andy Cutting, who contributed fine tunes, and



Chris Wood, Martin Simpson, and Karine Polwart, who all wrote new songs. The seasoned and classy playing of this now somewhat venerable band does the rest.

The whole project was conceived for Scotland’s 2016 Celtic Connections festival, where the music was given its world premier to a rapturous response. This album is a fine testament to the band’s growth and development over the past decade, and provides many moments of beauty, inspiration, and emotional depth.

— By Tim Readman

The Bombadils

New Shoes (Borealis)



There’s a bit of a buzz going on about Luke Fraser and Sarah Frank, a.k.a. The Bombadils.

These two erstwhile Montreal music students have a repertoire of folk and bluegrass-influenced music, but studied classical composition and performance at university. This shows in the playing and singing. There’s an exactness and precision here that is somewhat reminiscent of The Punch Brothers, especially on tracks such as

the weaving instrumental *Squirrels Rule The Day*, *Raccoons Rule The Night*.

Fraser plays guitar, and mandolin and sings and Frank sings and plays violin and clawhammer banjo, while a supporting cast of hot players, such as Oliver Swain, Sarah Jane Scouten, Trent Freeman, and Jayme Stone add to the mix.

Frank’s vocals are sweet and delicate while Fraser’s are smooth and clear, and their voices blend well together. Overall, the music is squeaky clean without a trace of grit. This is a very listenable album that is pretty much guaranteed to cement The Bombadils’ place in the firmament of Canadiana-folk musical talent.

— By Tim Readman

Hannah Shira Naiman

Know The Mountain (Merriweather Records)



Murder ballads, waltzes, fiddle tunes, old-time traditional tunes, silly kids’ songs: Hannah Shira Naiman has it all on her new disc, which I call Hogtown Appalachiana.

Shira Naiman definitely has tons of cred in the world of old-time

music. Her dad, Arnie Naiman, was playing clawhammer banjo way before it was cool on Queen Street, and she has spent a lot of time in Appalachia, making field recordings and soaking up the culture.

She has done way more than just parroting what she heard down South, but is well on the road to using the old-time genre as a building block to her own style. She has used the talents of producer Don Kerr, who has produced rock acts such as The Rheostatics, and a great cast of backup musicians, including her dad and most notably percussionist Gary Craig (who also plays with Bruce Cockburn). I mean, when was the last time you heard drums on an old-time record?

Shira Naiman’s songwriting is also developing, not radio-friendly material but evolving towards songs that tell a story. Take *The Blue House*, a long ballad about a young woman who is lured to a cabin by a fiddler, who ends up digging her grave with a silver spade. Or *Callum MacDonald*, a tale about love for a Scotsman that was never meant to be.

With a clear, unaffected voice, Shira Naiman is well on her way to carrying on her family’s musical tradition.

— By Mike Sadava



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100 Mile House

Hiraeth (Independent)



With the release of *Hiraeth*, the fourth and most accomplished album by 100 Mile

House, the duo of Peter Stone and Denise MacKay once again gently yet firmly affirm their place floating in the highest ether of Canadian acoustic music.

Beautifully, carefully recorded and performed, here is a gem box of gorgeous, mature arrangements of Stone/MacKay originals that traverse great distances—from England to Alberta, the sting of unrealized birth to the loss of life well lived. And, well, beyond.

The title is an untranslatable Welsh word that evokes “a sense of nostalgia, a longing for a person or place that may have never existed”.

That notion covers a fair piece, and yet *Hiraeth* is up to the task, stitching together a hand-made emotional quilt, comforting and yet also acknowledging the vicissitudes and frailties of life none of us can escape.

That in itself, is a bond if we, each vulnerable, care to see it that way. You hesitate to isolate a single song or two here; it all fits together so seamlessly as it skips across the genres. This attention to detail extends to the CD's packaging, which matches the mood inside.

As always, all of this smart,

well-considered music is delivered via the absolutely unmistakable, warm, unforced vocals of Stone and his ever-so-close harmonies with MacKay—husband and wife—who sing together like siblings.

— By Alan Kellogg

Kate Rusby

Life In A Paper Boat (Pure Records)



A new release from Kate Rusby is always worth a listen...then another...and

another.

This record is no exception. Everything about this CD is beautiful—from the artwork and liner notes to the dreamy and cozy feeling of the tunes themselves. A continuing musical partnership with Damien O'Kane has resulted in some fresh takes on traditional songs and a cover of Archie Fisher's *The Witch Of Westmorland* in a cohesive package with original material that is lovely and comforting, as though you've heard the songs dozens of times, without being boring or playing it safe.

The bonus track features a tea-drinking superhero in a song that began as a tune for her kids but is coming to us fully formed and very clever. *Life In A Paper Boat* is lovely, comfort-food music at its best and this is a timeless album that is sure to become a favourite.

— By Tanya Corbin

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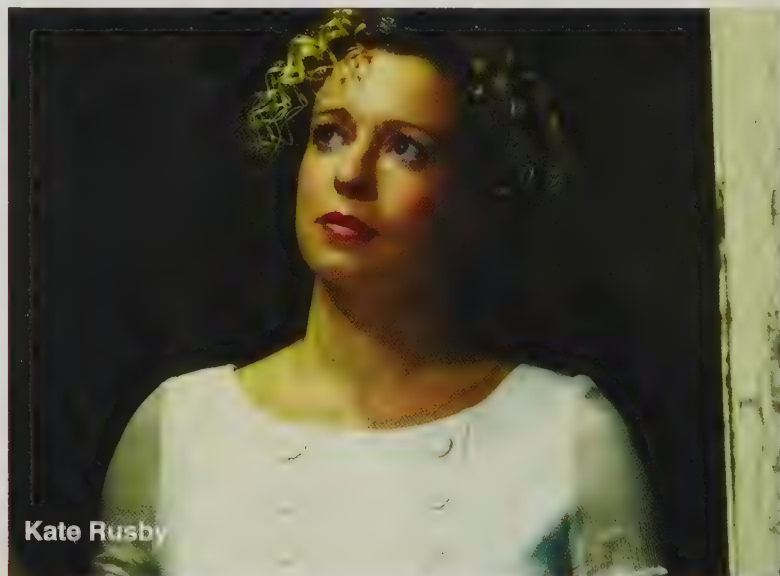
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Kate Rusby

Jenny Whitely

The Original Jenny Whitely (Black Hen Music)



If you didn't know her as the next generation of the musical Whitely clan, you

could be forgiven for thinking that Canadian Jenny Whitely is from Appalachia rather than Ontario, as this record showcases her musical roots spanning from traditional bluegrass to hillbilly hollers.

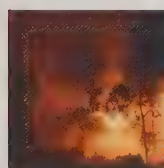
Her original tunes connect closer to home, including singalong chorus *Malade*, sung in French. Backing her up on a veritable jug band full of instruments are Sam Allison and Teilhard Frost (a.k.a. Sheesham and Lotus).

The lo-fi, live-off-the-floor sound of the record sounds like she's performing an intimate set right in your living room. This is a diverse and enjoyable collection of roots music that is sure to show up on some best-of lists, and perhaps could garner the two-time Juno winner another nod for folk/roots recording of the year.

— By Tanya Corbin

Mandolin Orange

Blindfaller (Yep Roc)



I really liked the last outing from these guys and *Blindfaller* is even more my thing.

Desperate and darker hues this time out, which the song titles alone suggest (*Lonesome Whistle* and *Cold Lover's Waltz* anyone?).

Vocally, Andrew Marlin and Emily Frantz have a languid western country vibe that shambled in from the desert somewhere out near Robert Earl Keen and Gillian Welch.

The music is constructed from delicately intricate guitar, mandolin, and fiddle, played in classic country and bluegrass modes.

Wildfire is a standout song, with its lyrical skewering of America's refusal to let go of its southern pride. Similarly, *Gospel Shoes* excoriates the contemporary misuse of faith for political ends. Few



bands marry such contemporary outlooks with such great music. Don't miss *Blindfaller*.

— By Richard Thornley

Kristi Stassinopoulou & Stathis Kalyviotis

NYN (World Music Network)



Electronic effects heighten the Byzantine melodies and Mediterranean rhythms.

Hypnotic pile-ups, whether on *Step By Step* or *Wave By Wave*, evoke a relentlessness, lead to thoughts of eternity.

Kristi Stassinopoulou's music is often described as psychedelic. I find this so, not as a woozy sensuality, but as a repetitive force that drives a wedge into the logical mind.

And then there are the lyrics.

Sung in a stripped down aesthetic and swaying rhythm,

Stassinopoulou seems to suggest taking refuge in a kind of stoic abstraction: "*They say the sound of vibrating particles / Echoes in the parallel fields of the universe.*" I think these songs are easier to understand if you don't speak Greek.

This is the seventh album collaboration for Kristi Stassinopoulou and Stathis Kalyviotis. Over the years they have covered a lot of stylistic ground, from punk to indie rock to something described as "ethno garage". Their new album is entitled *Nyn*, which means now in Greek, a "now" that seems to stretch out in limitless time. Kalyviotis's laouto, an instrument similar to the bouzouki, is sensual, his looping and electronic effects darkly unsettling. On the song *I Know Nothing*, Stassinopoulou sings: "*Only one phrase exists. 'I know that I know nothing'.*" *The philosopher whispered it, to*

remember this all day long I have made it my duty." No wonder they say the Greeks invented philosophy.

The album notes go into some detail about the economic woes of Greece in the European Union and how this becomes real pain for real people. A black-and-white photo on the album shows a man sitting on an empty cement bench at night silhouetted under a fluorescent light. Apt image indeed for an album stark in expression and somewhat cold in comfort.

— By Lark Clark

Na Mooneys

Na Mooneys (Independent)



Formed of some strong musical blood, Na Mooneys offer up a healthy serving

of traditional Donegal jigs, reels, and highlands. *Na Mooneys*, the family's first proper album as a group, draws from the collective talent of the Maonaigh (Mooney) family, resulting in a technically impressive romp through the music of Ireland's northwestern coast.

Each member of the band—being of Frankie Mooney's stock—executes their part with the expertise that only a tight-knit family like the Maonaighs could. With Anna and Mairéad's vocals, Ciarán's fiddling, and





Gearóid on guitar, Na Mooneys sound not only like they've been playing together for years but also as though they've enjoyed every minute of it.

A mixture of largely traditional songs with a few original tunes and arrangements mixed in for good measure, *Na Mooneys* is sure to give you the sense of walking down a beaten path and taking in all the castles, coastlines, and culture that Donegal has to offer.

– By Mikael Raheem

Claire Lynch

North By South (Compass Records)



"It all started with an email from a fan in Toronto..."

North By South is a collection of Canadian penned songs, performed by bluegrass pioneer Claire Lynch. After discovering their shared love of music, the fan—now her husband—began his tutelage of all things Canadian. The result, produced by Alison Brown and backed up by an impressive array of guest musicians, including Jerry Douglas and Bela Fleck, capture modern Canadian folk song at its best.

Lynch's clear vocals, well suited to her bluegrass roots, are surprisingly adept at these cover songs from all over Canada's folk

map. Songs include those of well-known Canadians such as Bruce Coburn's *All The Diamonds In The World* and Willie P. Bennett's *Andrew's Waltz* but also songs from lesser-known songsmiths such as Old Man Luedecke, Lynn Miles, and Ron Sexsmith. These re-interpretations of Canadiana at its finest feel refreshing and new in Lynch's capable hands.

– By Tanya Corbin

Andino Suns

Madera (Independent)



Andean music. From Regina. *Madera* is the third album from Andino Suns and a

departure from the electric rock of their previous recording. Putting heads together for a year, the band's three members wrote the songs collaboratively with madera (wood) as the connective theme. Using only acoustic instruments, and Andean ones at that, Andino Suns has emerged with a blend of strings, flutes and vocal harmonies that hangs together and resonates with beauty.

Strengthening the sound, the band brought in Montreal percussionist Daniel Emden to co-produce. Emden brings experience from Boston's Berklee World String Orchestra and has worked

with some of South America's most interesting artists.

So how did this group come to be? Well, go back to 1973 and "the other 9/11"—the military overthrow of Chilean President Salvador Allende, imposing a lockdown that ended democracy in Chile for years to come. Canada took in approximately 7,000 Chilean exiles, many of them landing in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The significance of those events continues to reverberate in the next generation: all three of the Andino Suns (sons) are of Chilean heritage.

Exposed to Chilean music since childhood, the band maintains connection to the rhythms and spirit of the Chilean folk music

which nurtured them. With one exception, the songs are sung in Spanish. Instruments such as the charango (10-stringed instrument the size of a uke), the quena (reed flute), and the zampoña (panpipes) are central to the group's sound.

The blend of the three-part male harmonies is warm and deep, a real treat. Built around loping Latin rhythms and a touch of reggae, the band has created a sound both authentically Chilean and distinctly Canadian.

– By Lark Clark

Rant Maggie Rant

Latitude (Independent)



This group from Stratford, ON, have managed to pull together an album that not only

draws from a healthy palette of traditional style but also manages to do it well. From the Maritime folk of *Mi'kmaq Enigma* to the Celtic drive of *Hold The Candle*, Rant Maggie Rant delivers catchy tunes that keep you rapt, not quite sure what the next song might bring but excited for it nonetheless.

The album also showcases the obvious instrumental skills of the musicians: the seamless tempo changes in *Lemur's Femur* along with Glen Dias's mesmerizing tenor recorder lines in *An Dro* are executed perfectly.

The album's one failing can be found in the more traditional



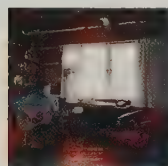
originals such as *The Ballad Of Old Jack McGraw* and *Southwestern Ontario Town* where Barry James Payne's lyrics fall just short of being gripping and often feel like they're being forced into an otherwise lovely backing track.

Despite a few songs, however, this album is a must if you're looking for a good romp through South Asian, Celtic, Canadian, and many other world traditions.

– By Mikael Raheem

Zachary Lucky

Everywhere A Man Can Be (Wroxtton Recordings)



There's such proximity in *Everywhere A Man Can Be*, the latest from

Saskatchewan troubadour Zachary Lucky. Even with its fully lush country-folk production, the sound of the record never strays far from Lucky's breathy baritone, recalling Gordon Lightfoot in his tender phrasing, so as to illustrate the weary nature of a songwriter who's run the miles, where the Prairie highway breeze is, at times, the only harmony a man can find.

Lucky's walking the walk here, providing a soundtrack to that most universal process, of growing from the recklessness of youth to a man in full, as on *Sell All You Have*, where the task of keeping up with responsibility comes to bear alongside the knowledge that failure is possible even if you've

done everything you could. The title cut illustrates those long miles run across a country whose geography can be far less forgiving than the well-earned reputation of its populace.

If there's a drawback to being on the road as much as Zachary Lucky is, beside the obvious homesick and lonesome feelings it brings to the fore, it's that your muse becomes as much the highway as anything. While Lucky is careful to avoid cliché, and tells his highway stories as well as any troubadour, it's worth noting that there is more to life than the road.

– By Michael Dunn

Trad Attack!

Aahh! (Nordic Notes)



This trio from Estonia caused a big buzz at Folk Alliance a couple of years ago with their high-energy live show and contagious enthusiasm. This is folk rock without borders or boundaries.

The band consists of Sandra Sillamaa (torupill, vocals), Jalmari Vabarna (guitar), and Tõnu Tubli (percussion). Trad Attack! have won numerous awards in their home country and are credited with bringing ancient Estonian folk traditions to a new audience. Using archival recordings of old folk songs and overlaying them with their own vocals, melodies, and instruments, much of the



record feels like upbeat trance-like chants.

This combined with their heavy reliance on the torupill (Estonian bagpipe) and mouth harp, while compelling for live shows, can get a tad repetitive when listening to CD. That said, the CD is danceable and upbeat, and brings forth a tradition many North Americans would not be familiar with. I'll definitely have it in rotation.

– By Tanya Corbin

Fromseier Hockings

Flot Gevir (GO Danish Folk Music)



The act of playing music in a duo setting can be tricky business. Each player has her or his share of responsibility, and there are no other band members to lean on should things get dodgy. There is also the challenge of how to carve out a unique niche in the crowded world of fiddle/guitar combos.

Fortunately the Danish duo of Ditte Fromseier (fiddle/voice) and Sigurd Hockings (guitar) are more than capable of navigating this well-established musical territory. In fact, they do so with a sense of inventiveness, artistry, and playfulness.

Their inventiveness comes to the fore on the opening track,

Vandmand. The listener is taken on a rollicking ride weaving a beautiful, creative dialogue, as Ditte and Sigurd toss melody and accompaniment back and forth. The song *Inger Elises* introduces a lilting, memorable melody before the tempo changes, and the whole thing takes off in a sprint to the finish.

Their entire set displays nice pacing and variety, and is an excellent contribution to the worldwide folk music duo tradition.

– By Barry Livingston

Runa

Live (Independent)



Runa has so much to offer, even for those of us who aren't aficionados of

Celtic music.

This trans-Atlantic quintet, of Irish, Canadian, and American descent, is true to the tradition with bouncy clavier rhythms, bodhran pounding, singing with the Irish lilt and occasionally in Gaelic, tales of villains who lead women to the edge of cliffs, and, of course, seamless medleys of fiddle tunes.

But they subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, add touches from this side of the pond. There are elements of bluegrass and even dawg music here. They do Irish versions of tunes that are staples in the bluegrass repertoire, such as the kickoff tune *Ain't No Grave*. They even throw a few bars of *My Girl* into *The False Knight on the Road*. And unlike many a Celtic band, they aren't afraid to veer off the traditional melody and improvise, trading eights and even fours between fiddle and mandolin, an instrument not common in Celtic music. There's even a drum/percussion solo. And they are, as one would say on this side of the Atlantic, mighty fine pickers.

This live album, recorded in Maryland on St. Patrick's Day, is the next best thing to being there. You'll wish you were there.

– By Mike Sadava



Trad Attack!

Various Artists

Greentrax 30th Anniversary Collection –
The Special Projects (Greentrax Recordings)



This year is the 30th anniversary of Scotland's Greentrax Recordings. This double CD

includes highlights from their special projects drawn from the past three decades—and what highlights they are!

Farewell To Oban Set by Aly Bain and Phil Cunningham; *The Last Trip Home* by Dick Gaughan; *Zagreb/Vigo* by Tony McManus, Alain Genty and Soig Siberil, and *Bass Drone Blitz* by Gordon Duncan are a few of my picks.

There are a few tracks I didn't appreciate quite so much, such as the medley of *Keep Right On To The End Of The Road/It's A Long Way To Tipperary/Pack Up Your Troubles* by The Scottish Pals Singers, but their inclusion is understandable, given that the goal was to represent the breadth and depth of the venerable label's archives.

This is celebration of Scottish music that contains many gems and rightly celebrates the fine achievements of Greentrax Recordings.

– By Tim Readman

Various Artists

Cuban Rare Groove (Rough Guides)



Castro's revolution instigated an exodus from Cuba. This compilation from Rough Guides chooses that as its starting point.

Titled *Cuban Rare Groove*, this is music of the Cuban diaspora. The artists are either ex-pats, born in the U.S., or even from Paris and Milan. Tracks span the years from the 1960s to the present.

So what happened to Cuban music when it left the island? You'll find styles ranging from santeria bata drumming, salsa, or psychedelic boogaloo, to contemporary Miami Cuban funk, some of it served up with a liberal helping of



queso. This is for those of us who crave all things Cuban.

– By Lark Clark

Mallebrok

Levende Brav (GO' Danish Folk Music)



Mallebrok is a fairly new Danish folk band with a lot to offer.

Their unusual instrumentation includes trombone, flute, bagpipe, hammered dulcimer, vocals, tablas, cajon, and electronics.

Despite their contemporary leanings, the band also has a strong sense of their history and culture. Much of their repertoire is based on centuries-old folk songs about love, revenge, and even trolls. When the band came together in 2014 they were interested in offering their own take on this time-tested material, with global, rock, and electronic elements added to the mix. On top of it all is the powerful vocal presence of Mia Guldhammer, one of Denmark's most esteemed folksingers.

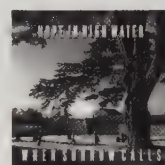
Aside from rock influences, the band also excels on the more traditional-sounding Jonas Lindh original *Olinda*. The tune *Mallebrok* features some nice orchestral touches, and Morten Musicus's hammered dulcimer introduction is a highlight.

Mallebrok is a band with deep roots, expanding in new directions. Hopefully, they will be able to release an English edition, with lyrics and liner notes, next time around.

– By Barry Livingston

Hope In High Water

When Sorrow Calls (Harsh Realm Records)



Hope In High Water is the name of the duo consisting of Josh Chandler Morris and Carly Slade from Milton Keynes, U.K. They're acoustic, somewhat dark, Americana in the tradition of Gillian Welch and Dave Rawlings, The Handsome Family, or Canada's The Marrieds. The EP is a four-song sampler and all four tracks are strong in the songwriting, vocal, and acoustic playing-with-feeling departments.

The purpose of a sampler is to give the listener a taste and leave them wanting more and this disc certainly succeeds in that. You can hear that they're good at what they do, you want to hear them push their musical boundaries even further and explore a broader palette. If they keep working at this level and push themselves even farther they're definitely going to be an act to follow in the future.

An extremely promising debut disc.

– By Barry Hammond

Balsam Range

Mountain Voodoo (Mountain Home Music Company)



There are some albums that get your fingers itching, needing to pick up an instrument and start playing along. Bluegrass music is participatory



Hope In High Water

anyway, which is one of the great things about it. But this is more than that. It's music that you not only want to play along to, to explore where it goes in that sense, but that you also want to be a part of.

There are a couple of barnburners here, such as *Chain Gang Blues*, thought they happily come later in the mix, right about the time we are ready for them and not a moment before.

Which is great, too. This album is easily the best programmed release from Balsam Range, which perhaps is one reason why it feels like their best one yet. *Last Train To Kitty Hawk* was their first one to really catch a lot of ears, perhaps because of the strength of the title track.

This one, despite a title that is a bit cringeworthy — *Mountain Voodoo* — has great tracks, too. But they come within more of a package than the previous collections.

As always, the musicianship, the arrangements, the harmonies, and the care that the band has demonstrated in the past are all here again. A fantastic album from a fantastic band. If you haven't yet experienced them, this is a great place to start.

— By Glen Herbert

The Coal Porters

No. 6 (Independent)



This is bluegrass from the United Kingdom, sort of. The Coal Porters have been around for close to a decade, and thankfully have always allowed their English roots to show rather than trying to sound like they're from some Kentucky hollow in Trump country.

Led by Sid Griffin, a London-based American who was into what the Brits call Americana before Americana was cool, the band has had success on both sides of the pond, including acceptance in the American bluegrass world.

Although the band has the usual bluegrass lineup with guitar, ban-

jo, fiddle, and mandolin, and their songs include many a reference to states, they're what they call "alt-bluegrass", which in this case means they sound a bit like Old Crow Medicine Show if they had come from south London.

The band is more about the songwriting and harmonies than the picking, which is passable but not spectacular. Some of the songs, such as *The Blind Bartender*, are long stories in the English ballad tradition. Kerenza Peacock, who plays some hot fiddle on an instrumental called *Chopping the Garlic*, puts her soprano voice on *Play A Tune*, which sounds like a British music hall number from the 1920s.

In the opening cut, Griffin grieves a big loss to the world of punk music in *The Day the Last Ramone Died*. Alt-bluegrass indeed.

— By Mike Sadava

The Western Flyers

Wild Blue Yonder (Versa-Tone Records)



This album is bound to make you two-step all the way to Texas. Western swing, that combination of country and jazz that was made famous by Bob Wills, is alive, kicking, and progressing in the hands of the Western Flyers.

You could hardly ask for three more accomplished musicians. At first listen, I was blown away by the incendiary fiddle playing of



Ivas John

Good Days a Comin' (Right Side Up Records)



least on the blues map.

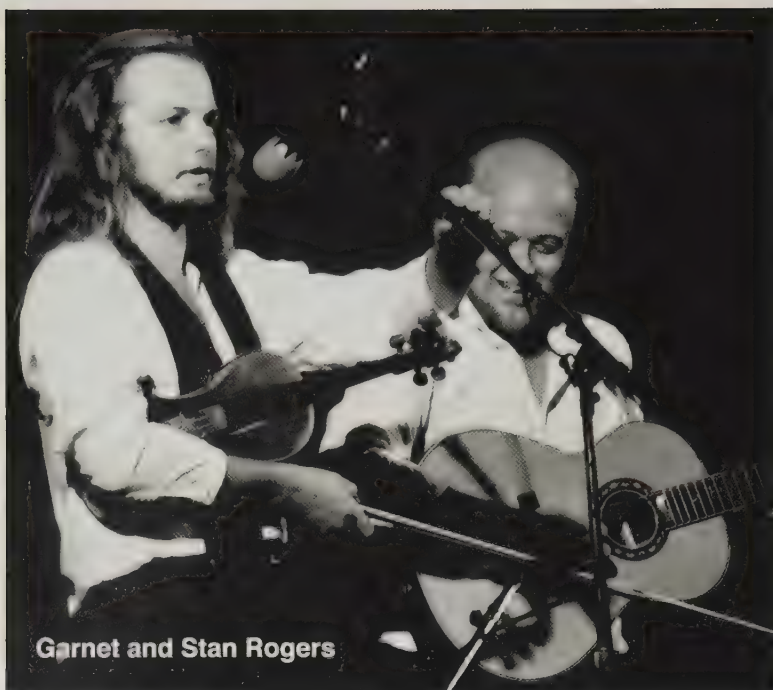
John isn't well known on this side of the border, but he should be. His fifth album is a winning collection of mostly original acoustic folk blues, all played with a great sense of deep groove. He shows himself to be a deft guitar player, both flat picking and fingerpicking, and he has gathered an impressive assembly of acoustic musicians from the midwest to back him up.

John, with the help of his father, Edward, writes some fine tunes about heartbreak, the loneliness of the road, and my favourite, *Payday Boogie*: "You take your hard-earned money, have a good time / By Monday morning you're down to nickels and dimes."

He also does a credible job on covers such as Merle Travis's *Dark as a Dungeon* and the Tom Paxton classic *Can't Help But Wonder Where I'm Bound*.

Comparisons aren't always accurate but I think of Eric Bibb, Delbert McLinton, and Rick Fines. John's touring is confined to Illinois and Missouri but he deserves a much wider recognition.

— By Mike Sadava



Garnet and Stan Rogers

Garnet Rogers

Night Drive: Travels With My Brother
ISBN: 978-0-9950742-0-0
Tickle Shore Publishing / 754 pages / paperback / \$30.00



Stan Rogers's impact on Canadian folk music was, and remains, seismic. That is indisputable. He wrote about the

working class and regions of this country in a manner once found only in the best of our traditional songs. The six LPs he recorded while alive—two released posthumously—would inspire such future, gifted songwriters as James Keelaghan, David Francey, and Dave Gunning. Tragically, Rogers died in 1983 at the age of 33.

For the better part of his all-too-brief career, his younger brother, Garnet Rogers, stood by his side, aiding and abetting on flute, fiddle, guitar, and vocal harmonies.

Night Drive: Travels With My Brother, as the title suggests, focuses largely on their time performing and recording together as they clawed their way out of southern Ontario to international acclaim.

"This isn't a history. It's a memoir," writes Garnet in the foreword. "Histories have to be impartial and scrupulously precise. Memoirs, not so much." Well, there's a get-out-of-jail card if

ever I saw one. So, yes, there are satirical liberties with the truth. And laugh-out-loud commentary, too. Cue Joni Mitchell: "Her vibrato in the early years sounded like a French ambulance." Young Rogers—six years Stan's junior—does have a nice turn of phrase and an artist's astute eye for detail.

As one would expect, these two brothers manifested a boundless passion for music. More surprisingly, though, is the eclecticism they embraced as youngsters: Patsy Cline, Roy Orbison, Martha and The Vandellas, Lead Belly, Les Paul and Mary Ford, Chuck Berry, Howlin' Wolf, Odetta, Eric Burdon and the Animals, The Supremes, The Beatles, Woody Guthrie, Jim Reeves, Handel... As adults, though, they turned more to traditional artists such as Paul Brady and Andy Irvine, Archie Fisher, Peter Bellamy...

And if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Stan Rogers impressed the best.

Ashley (Tyger) Hutchings—one of England's pre-eminent traditional musical innovators and co-founder of such trailblazing bands as Fairport Convention, Steeleye Span, and The Albion Country Band—plagiarized Stan's *Northwest Passage* for his song *Wolfe* without crediting its author. Garnet, rightfully, took umbrage

but does little for his credibility describing Hutchings as, "a member of one of the various English bands who were constantly trying to inject what they fondly imagined to be rock and roll into endless, dreary English folk dirges, as if playing all 400 verses of *Tam Lin* on out-of-tune electric guitars was just what the world had been waiting for."

Despite extolling the heart-warming virtues of his musical heroes, there's little sense of achievement in Rogers's memoir. Rather, it's a dark, raw, ribald, self-deprecating, no-holds-barred account of his life with his brother. "I was an annoying and mouthy little shit right from the get go," he confesses in the opening pages. Throughout the course of the narrative he will spiral into the depths of a debilitating depression, drinking a bottle-and-a-half of scotch a day, and hanging on to his sanity by a thread.

Besides the habitual daily bouts of drinking, Stan's vices included dabbling briefly with heroin before developing a taste for cocaine in the months before he died. "It might have turned into a real issue had he lived," quotes Garnet.

The perpetual hangovers, the white-knuckle winter driving to endless, demoralizing gigs in dire, empty venues, the constant bickering and the reprehensible physical violence fashion a depressing framework for the first two-thirds of this book that no amount of dark humour can gloss over. Consider this: Stan and Garnet kick a kid almost unconscious because he tried to break into their van. Garnet dives across a table, grabs a youth by the throat because he claps out of time? The lad didn't know better. He was simply enjoying himself. Stan swings a mic stand at a heckler's head and, luckily, only puts a hole in a concrete wall?

And there's no shortage of vitriol aimed at Stan's record producer, Paul Mills, who earned his spurs overseeing CBC Radio's trailblazing folk show *Touch The Earth*

hosted by Sylvia Tyson. "In the interests of full disclosure, it must be said that Paul and I did not get along pretty much from the get go... We just didn't click on a personal level," writes Garnet. While he does concede the importance of *Touch The Earth* and the immense work Paul did to promote Canadian songwriters, it's all downhill from there. He hated Mills's production values and guitar playing. "He seemed bent on...loading the songs down with cluttered up arrangements, and syrupy strings." But Mills produced five out of the six albums Stan recorded. And Mills found funding from the CBC for Stan's LP *From Fresh Water*.

Nobody ever accused Stan Rogers of suffering fools gladly. So for the sake of integrity, I asked several people involved in some of these recordings for their thoughts. Each said unequivocally that Paul and Stan discussed the production process at length before and during the recordings. Surely that's a case for consensus?

From the momentum built around such independently released LPs as *Fogarty's Cove* and, in particular, *Between The Breaks* and *Northwest Passage*, the brothers and their then bass player David Alan Eadie found themselves out in Alberta—it's difficult to tell exactly when as there are very few dates included in the 85 chapters—and met Mansel and Annie Davies. This meeting marks a clear turning point for the fortunes of Stan Rogers. Annie would book the band numerous, decent, well-paying gigs in the West and they would go from playing the Calgary Folk Club to packing the city's 2,700-seat Jubilee Auditorium (the latter information, somehow, overlooked).

And their good fortune continued when they signed with astute American booking agent Jim Fleming, whose roster would include the likes of Ani DiFranco, Judy Collins, and Tom Paxton. Fleming, too, would book them good gigs that eased the financial strains of touring. Stan's label,

Fogarty's Cove Music, also flourished. Oddly, Garnet fails to mention that Stan produced and released wonderful albums by the likes of Eritage, Friends of Fiddlers Green and Tim Harrison.

But as the rigours of the road and musical disputes piled up, Garnet grew more and more disenchanted to the point he briefly quit the trio. Their last gig together was at the Kerrville Folk Festival in Texas where *Night Drive* concludes. Desperate to get home, Garnet took an early flight. Stan's later plane caught fire and he died at Greater Cincinnati Airport.

Garnet, in his own way, would develop into a songwriter the equal of his older sibling.

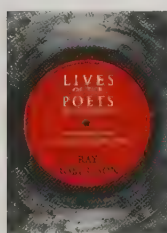
While *Night Drive* is a fascinating and engaging read from start to finish, and Garnet Rogers is clearly a talented writer, the preponderance of "embroidered" caustic, superfluous distractions, despite their immense accomplishments left largely unheralded, adds certain unnecessary frustrations. The definitive word on Stan Rogers, then, still requires a conventional biography.

– By Roddy Campbell

Ray Robertson

Lives Of The Poets (With Guitars)

ISBN: 978-1-77196-072-4



Biblioasis / 283 pages / paperback / \$19.95

With a nod to Samuel Johnson's *Lives Of The Poets*, Toronto scribe, Ray Robertson, a

novelist (*Home Movies*, *Heroes*, *Moody Food*, *Gently Down The Stream*, *What Happened Later*, *David*, and *I Was There The Night He Died*) and non-fiction writer (*Mental Hygiene: Essays On Writers and Writing* and *Why Not? Fifteen Reasons Live*) explores the lives and music of 13 songwriters and musicians who were outsiders from society and the music business but influential on other musicians.

His selections aren't always the famous (though some are). Some

are personal and obscure but always interesting and illuminating. They run the gamut from icons such as rock'n'roll legend Little Richard through punk rock heroes The Ramones, Small Faces mod figure Ronnie Lane, female gospel blues icon Sister Rosetta Tharpe, country-rock experimenter Gram Parsons, to classic songwriters Townes Van Zandt and Guy Clark, to more obscure types such as Alan (Blind Owl) Wilson from Canned Heat, bluesman Hound Dog Taylor, songsters Willie P. Bennett, Paul Siebel, and Willis Alan Ramsey, to newgrass pioneer John Hartford. All were brilliant at what they did and all had some tragic aspect to their lives.

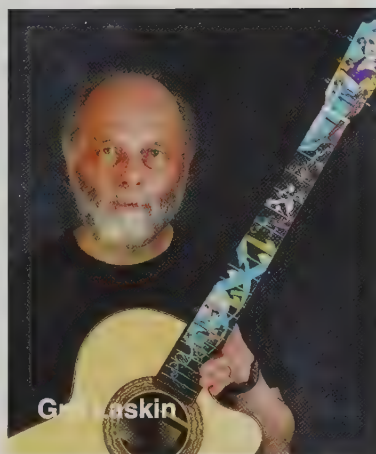
Robertson has a fine way with words, bringing to bear an insightful mind with a wide-ranging set of influences and perspectives. While his opinions are personal and may not always agree with established critical theory, he backs them up with solid reasoning and ample evidence.

One example: he downplays Gram Parsons's musical influence on the Rolling Stones by way of teaching open tuning to Keith Richards, choosing to focus on his gifts as a songwriter and vocalist. This is certainly debatable but he makes his case.

He brings his subjects alive with all their flaws and human foibles and makes the reader interested in delving deeper into both their stories and music. It's also worth it for at least one quote that should be engraved on every recording studio wall and drummed into the minds of every record producer: "You can always tell on which albums an artist was attempting to sound 'contemporary'; those are the ones that always end up sounding dated".

Ray Robertson has done music fans a service by bringing us this fine study of 13 ground-breaking talents who all deserve to be remembered and enshrined in the pantheon of our musical memories.

– By Barry Hammond



William (Grit) Laskin

Grand Complications: 50 Guitars, 50 Stories

ISBN: 978-1-927958-84-1

Figure 1 / 246 pages / hardcover / \$45.00



"This is a gorgeous book, a really great gift for anyone interested in either the art of inlay or beautiful handmade guitars." That was

the final line of this critic's rave review on William (Grit) Laskin's first book, *A Guitarmaker's Canvas: The Inlay Art Of Grit Laskin*, in the spring 2004 issue of this magazine (No. 21).

In the 12 years that have elapsed since, nothing much has changed, except that Laskin's work has become even more subtle, more profound, and more beautiful still.

The overall concepts, narratives, imagery, textures, and complexity of his art have developed far beyond the work of almost any other artist doing this type of work. His guitars are museum/gallery-worthy objects of art. That they can be played and used to produce music is a lovely, added bonus.

Laskin, as I'd said then, is a practitioner of the fine art of inlay—the insertion of coloured material, usually pearlescent shell, stone, metal, ivory, or bone—into the headstock, neck, or body of a handmade guitar.

We're not talking the little pearl buttons, squares, or letters that many artists customize guitars with. We're talking elaborate figurative portraiture, graphic decoration, scenic landscapes, and

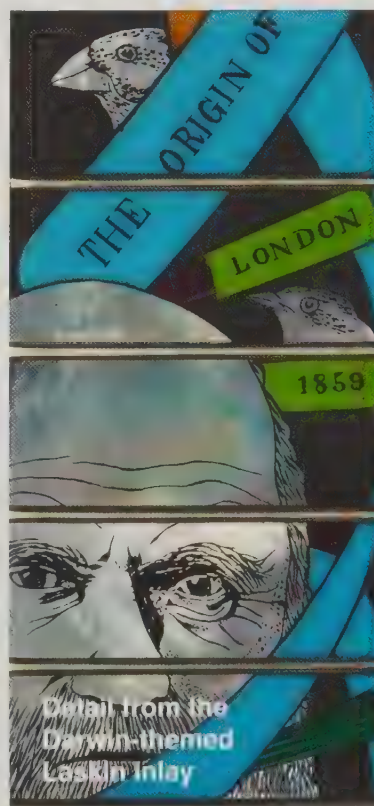
symbolic, surrealistic imagery worthy of any famous painter. He imbues his work with a sense of movement, narrative, meaning, and a feeling that the action continues beyond the "frame" of the guitar, out into the world.

His work *The Bridge* contains portraits of Shinichi Suzuki in Noh costume, his client as a rag doll, her dog, her husband as a hobby horse, and Emile Benoit in a mummers costume with a comedy mask. Just a few of the intriguing titles for his other designs are *Blueprint For Curves*, *The Big Bang*, *Bettie on Red* (a tribute to pinup girl Bettie Page), *Water Music*, and *Darwin To DNA*.

In this volume, the artist also gives us the stories of how he came to create these unique guitars, working closely with their owners, interviewing, researching, taking photographs, making preliminary drawings, and developing the artistic conception behind the images used.

The detail, craft, and brilliance of execution makes this book as singular as the artist. These stories and materials are every bit as fascinating and moving as the guitars themselves. A full-colour feast for the eyes and senses.

– By Barry Hammond





Le trio nous fait connaître son approche rafraîchissante, qui combine les airs celtiques et le jazz à un soupçon d'étrangeté, fruit de la magie du studio.

Par Tony Montague

NUA signifie « nouveau » en gaélique, et pour le trio de Toronto NUA, ce terme représente bien son approche aventureuse et contemporaine des airs celtiques traditionnels. NUA, c'est le fruit d'une amitié étroite entre le violoniste James Law, le guitariste Graeme McGillivray et le joueur de bodhrán Jacob McCauley, qui a produit *Bold* (2013) et *Flow* (2016), deux des meilleurs albums celtiques traditionnels canadiens parus au cours des dernières années. Chacun de ces albums déborde d'idées originales et passionnantes, amplifiant la portée sonore de la musique écossaise et irlandaise.

Le groupe a été créé il y a cinq ans, mais Graeme McGillivray et James Law font de la

musique ensemble depuis bien plus longtemps. « Ils ont commencé à suivre des cours de violon à l'âge de trois ans à Robert's Creek, B.C., là où ils ont grandi », rapporte Jacob. « Les parents de James sont tous deux originaires de l'Écosse. Ils ont dirigé un camp musical pendant de nombreuses années sur la Sunshine Coast. Graeme est plus Irlandais, mais il a de l'Écossais aussi. Je viens de Toronto, donc j'ai seulement du sang irlandais, et j'ai joué de la batterie dans le groupe familial avec ma mère dès l'âge de cinq ans. »

Comme source d'influence et d'inspiration, deux groupes ressortent pour NUA : Lau, un power-trio folk originaire de l'Écosse, et Flook, une formation récente originaire d'Angleterre et d'Irlande. Ces deux groupes sont des pionniers dans le domaine de la musique celtique progressive; ils se servent des bases de la musique traditionnelle pour créer une musique riche et composite qui défie les habitudes et les étiquettes faciles.

« J'ai été impressionné par la synergie entre le joueur de bodhrán John Joe Kelly et le guitariste Ed Boyd [Flook] », avoue Jacob. « Je n'ai jamais entendu un son aussi réfléchi et aussi juste de la part de deux joueurs rythmiques. Je voulais que NUA soit aussi bon qu'eux. Quant à Lau, je me rappelle avoir

trouvé ses compositions vraiment géniales lors de l'écoute de son premier album *Lightweights and Gentlemen* (2007). Aidan O'Rourke a définitivement eu une forte influence sur le jeu fluide, précis et sans fautes de James en tant que violoniste. »

En 2010, James et Graeme ont déménagé à Toronto pour étudier à l'École de musique, où ils ont appris à jouer du jazz, un autre ingrédient important de la recette musicale de NUA. « James a étudié la batterie parce qu'il trouvait qu'il avait tellement joué de violon, et cela lui donne une perspective non négligeable sur l'aspect percussif de NUA », explique Jacob. « Nous travaillons beaucoup ensemble en studio. Notre formation de jazz nous a permis d'acquérir des connaissances sur le genre et une excellente maîtrise technique. Graeme est capable de créer des progressions d'accords uniques, une habileté rare chez les guitaristes celtiques, qui sont pour la plupart autodidactes. Cela entraîne toutes sortes d'idées nouvelles. »

Les pièces musicales qui résultent de cette succession d'idées qui s'interinfluencent ont une forme et une couleur bien particulières, elles sont à la fois variées et organiques, le fruit de trois pensées sur des longueurs d'onde parallèles, qui se rejoignent pour s'élever ensemble.

« Nous y arrivons de différentes manières », explique Jacob. « Parfois, nous nous asseyons ensemble pour proposer des idées et nous écrivons tout un morceau ou même tout un ensemble de morceaux d'un seul trait. Parfois, l'un d'entre nous a une idée qui constitue notre point de départ. Graeme n'a pas son égal pour composer de nouveaux airs, lui ou James dira "on a un nouvel air!" – ils habitent sur la même rue alors que je suis à l'autre bout de la ville, alors ils enregistrent une maquette approximative, me l'envoient pour que j'improvise dessus et ensuite, nous nous réunissons pour pratiquer. Parfois, lors des répétitions, nous essayons de partir de zéro et de créer des variations intéressantes qui pourraient avoir du potentiel pour un ensemble de pièces. Quoi qu'il en soit, nous nous réunissons vers le début du processus. Généralement, nous traversons énormément de changements. »

L'ensemble de pièces « *Rest in Pineapple* », que l'on peut écouter en entier sur le site Web de NUA, montre l'esprit espiègle du groupe, son intelligence structurelle et sa compréhension profonde des idiomes écossais et irlandais, tandis que son titre apporte un nouvel éclairage sur leur style de vie.

« Je crois que la pièce-titre est ma préférée sur l'album », confie Jacob. « Trouver des titres est pour nous une source de plaisanteries continues. Graeme a écrit les deux ici, "*Rest in Pineapple*" et "*Russian Dragon*". Il vit dans une grande maison avec plein d'amis et l'un

d'entre eux défait les décors dans une salle de spectacle. Il peut emporter certains trucs chez lui et un jour, il a rapporté cet accessoire bizarre, une tombe qui ressemblait à un ananas. Il l'a transformé en fontaine, ça lui a pris des heures et des heures. C'est ce qui a mené au titre que Graeme a trouvé. Graeme est responsable de l'écriture de la majorité des morceaux plus dynamiques au tempo étrange. C'est une gigue qui sonne très bizarre sans les ajouts de pistes. »

Selon Jacob, les changements constants de tempo et de valeurs de notes de NUA ainsi que sa prédilection pour les airs « croches », un nombre inhabituel de mesures et d'autres fantaisies, provient très probablement de la fascination de Graeme pour les curiosités rythmiques plutôt que d'une influence provenant des Balkans ou de l'Europe de l'Est.

« Il y a sûrement un peu de ça, mais nous n'écoutons pas beaucoup de musique du monde. Graeme est un gars très rythmique, il aime peut-être simplement se lancer des défis à lui-même. Il adore écrire et je pense qu'il veut élargir ses possibles. La deuxième partie de "*Rest in Pineapple*" est en 5 temps, un des rythmes les plus difficiles à jouer. C'est toute une transition que de passer d'une mesure en 6/8 à une mesure en 5/4. Je trouve cela vraiment intéressant du point de vue de la mélodie aussi bien que de celui du rythme. C'est pourquoi nous avons décidé de faire un monoplage avec "*Rest in Pineapple*", si nous

ne pouvions montrer qu'un seul air au monde entier, ce serait celui-là. »

« *Smuggler's Cove* », aussi sur le site Web, se démarque également sur *Flow*; la musique disparaît en plein milieu du morceau, un effet saisissant, puis revient très tranquillement, graduellement, puis le volume augmente, le tempo s'accélère et la texture s'enrichit. « Ces airs sont plus simples : un rythme plus lent, commençant par une simple mélodie. Des pistes s'ajoutent, puis Graeme arrive avec une progression d'accord vraiment bonne et on entre et sort d'un rythme de reel en 4/4 pour ensuite passer à un rythme en 6 temps. »

« James avait l'idée d'une ligne de violon récurrente. On peut entendre l'accumulation. Au début, nous ne savions pas quoi faire de cette accumulation. Après plusieurs semaines de pratiques, nous continuions toujours de jouer ce même morceau. Je sentais que cela n'avait pas besoin d'être plus complexe, mais qu'il fallait ajouter des couches, des harmonies par James, par exemple. Au lieu d'en faire un reel (notre première idée), nous avons décidé de revenir à la mélodie originale. Le son était vraiment bien. En fait, il y a 64 couches de cordes sur l'accumulation au milieu du morceau, c'est beaucoup de travail pour un seul air. J'avais des frissons au début du morceau, qui commence tout doucement puis qui prend de plus en plus d'ampleur. J'ai des frissons encore aujourd'hui quand je l'écoute. »

(Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard)

Claire Lynch

North By South (Compass)



« Tout a commencé par le courriel d'un admirateur à Toronto... » *North By South* rassemble des chansons écrites par des auteurs

canadien, interprétées par une pionnière du bluegrass, Claire Lynch. Après avoir découvert qu'il partageaient le même amour pour la musique, l'admirateur, qui est maintenant son mari, a commencé à lui faire connaître le folk canadien. L'album qui résulte de cette rencontre, produit par Alison Brown et comptant un nombre impressionnant de musiciens invités dont Jerry Douglas, Bela Fleck et Alison Brown, représente le meilleur de la chanson folk canadienne moderne.

La voix claire de Lynch, bien adaptée à son passé bluegrass, s'adapte étonnamment bien à ces reprises de chansons provenant

de partout sur la carte folk du Canada. On y trouve des chansons d'artistes canadiens bien connus comme « *All The Diamonds In The World* » de Bruce Coburn et « *Andrew's Waltz* » de Willie P. Bennett, mais aussi d'auteurs moins connus tels que Old Man Luedecke, Lynn Miles et Ron Sexsmith. Ces réinterprétations talentueuses insufflent aux chansons originales une vie nouvelle grâce au génie de Claire Lynch.

– Par Tanya Corbin

Jenny Whitely

The Original Jenny Whitely (Black Hen Music)



Si vous ne la connaissiez pas en tant que membre de la nouvelle génération du clan Whitely, on pourrait vous pardonner de croire que la Canadienne Jenny Whitely est originaire des Appalaches américaines plutôt que de l'Ontario, puisque cet album présente

ses origines musicales, passant du bluegrass traditionnel au hillbilly hollers.

Ses chansons originales, dont « *Malade* », une chanson en français où le refrain est repris en chœur, nous rapprochent de notre chez-nous. Sam Allison et Teilhard Frost (alias Sheesham et Lotus) l'accompagnent avec un véritable jug band, utilisant une multitude d'instruments traditionnels ou bricolés.

Le son brut et primitif de l'enregistrement donne l'impression qu'elle joue directement dans l'intimité de notre salon. L'album propose une collection diversifiée et appréciable de musique traditionnelle, dont la valeur sera certainement reconnue et qui vaudra peut-être à son auteure, deux fois lauréate d'un Prix Juno, un autre signe de reconnaissance pour l'album folk/traditionnel de l'année.

– Par Tanya Corbin

(Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard)

"I love the name of this magazine, *Penguin Eggs* is one of my fave songs by one of my fave singers ever, Nic Jones" – Christy Moore

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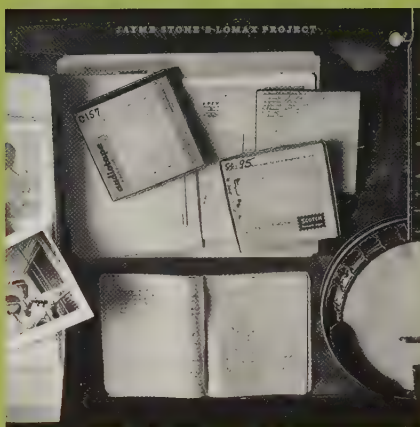
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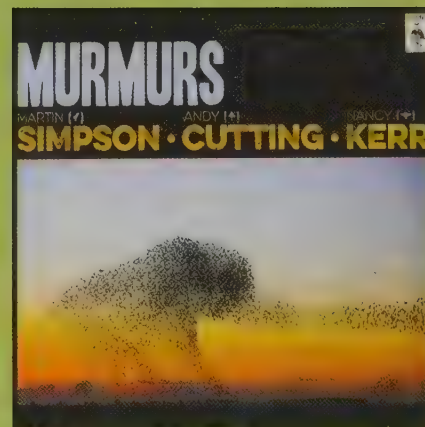
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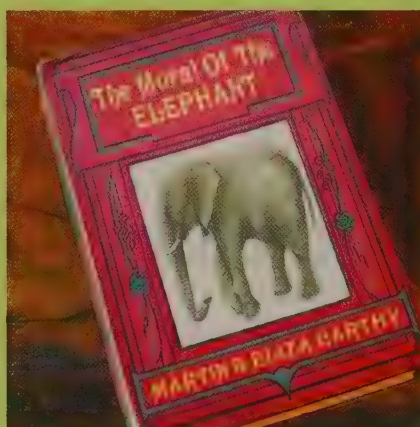
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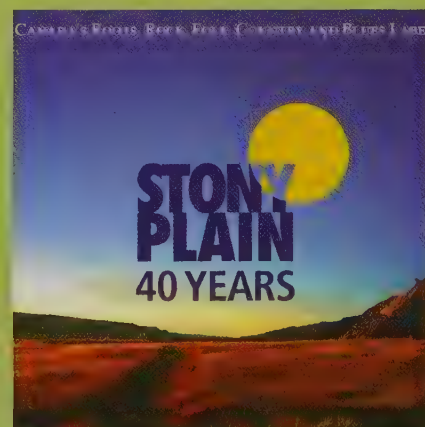
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À la rencontre de Soulwood

Installé dans les Cantons-de-l'Est du Québec, Soulwood est un trio singulier proposant une musique traditionnelle québécoise avec une saveur des Appalaches, une forte touche celtique, des accents old-time et des clins d'œil aux musiques cajuns et scandinaves. Le nom du groupe renvoie à la chaleur des instruments boisés, mais le ti-fer louisianais et le didgeridoo mâtinent parfois les mélodies. L'influence du folk américain se fait également sentir dans un climat souvent intime. Toutes ces inspirations transparaissent dans À l'orée du bois que Soulwood a récemment fait paraître. Ce premier disque est bellement co-réalisé par Nicholas Williams et Alex Kehler.

Trois musiciens l'animent. Willy Lemaistre transmet son intérêt pour la musique celtique avec ses cordes, sa flûte et sa voix. Daniel Haché, dont les parents acadiens viennent de la région de Bathurst au Nouveau-Brunswick, amène un côté cajun et joue le violon, les percussions, la guimbarde et le didgeridoo, tandis qu'Alex Kehler, qui est amoureux des musiques celtiques, scandinaves et old-time, porte aussi le violon, mais en ajoutant le nickelharpa suédois et le cistre nordique. Soulwood est un mélange de tout cela.

« Notre première rencontre remonte à 2011 », raconte Alex. « C'était dans une session de Dunham animée par Pascal Gemme. Je connaissais Willy et j'avais suivi sa carrière. À un moment, on s'est retrouvé les trois à jouer ensemble et on s'est dit qu'il venait de se passer quelque chose de magique. On a par la suite mis tout ce temps avant de sortir notre premier album. Quelqu'un avait dit : « Les choses qui prennent du temps valent la peine ».

Maintenant installé à Sherbrooke, Alex a grandi à Asheville en Caroline du Nord dans le bassin du old-time près de la frontière du Tennessee, alors que Daniel a passé sa jeunesse à Waterloo et Willy, dans les environs de Sutton. Ont-ils conçu un son des Cantons-de-l'Est? « On peut parler de cette diversité anglophone-francophone qu'on a dans le groupe », répond Alex Kehler. « On peut aussi parler de la proximité avec les États-Unis. On n'a peut-être pas un son typique des Cantons-de-l'Est, mais on a quand même notre appartenance à cette région pour la musique traditionnelle ».

Sur le disque, on retrouve Boumbadiboum qui fut collectée auprès de Jean-Paul Guimond, La valse de la Grande Ourse qui est une composition estrienne et À la Claire fontaine, un classique du folklore québécois. Ailleurs, Les flammes ramène au répertoire cajun. On reprend aussi André Marchand, le violoneux Joseph Larade de Chéticamp

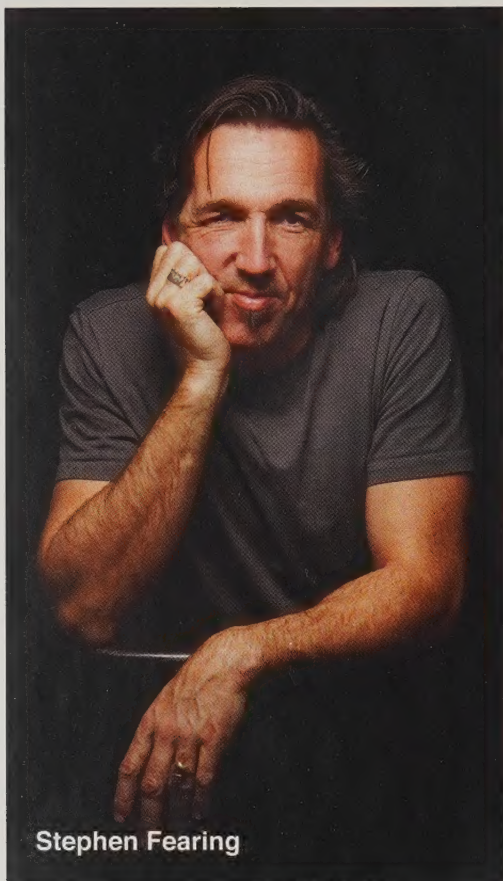
et on s'inspire autant de Robbie Burns, de l'Irlande, de la polska suédoise et même de la Carter Family.

« Le fil conducteur que j'utilise souvent pour décrire notre trajectoire est géographique », explique Alex. « Les Appalaches commencent aux États-Unis, montent au Québec et s'en vont en Acadie. Il y a très longtemps, lorsqu'il y avait juste un continent qui s'appelait Pangea, ça continuait jusqu'en Écosse et en Norvège. Les Appalaches, c'est la chaîne la plus vieille de la terre ». À l'origine d'une belle histoire musicale.

– Par Yves Bernard



A Point Of View



Stephen Fearing

Celebrated singer/songwriter Stephen Fearing wrote a protest song about global politics and found that the times they are certainly a changin’.

“Where have all the protest singers gone? I’ve heard this question ad nauseam over the years and a quick ride on your favourite search engine shows it cropping up in print articles going back decades. Certainly this is still an ongoing conversation within the folk community.

Protest songs have been with us for as long as people have had grievances. From The Hutchinson Family in the mid-1800s singing about abolition, politics, war, and women’s suffrage, to Joe Hill in the early 1900s singing *There is Power in a Union*, all the way up to the Righteous Babe herself, Ani DiFranco, the tradition of raising our voices in song has been a powerful ally to those who find themselves under the thumb.

However, recently it’s been difficult to find anyone within the folk world or beyond who is considered a protest singer, not to mention a contemporary song that fits the bill, which is somewhat surprising given the current political

climate.

In the past, I have written several songs that could be considered topical songs, if not outright protest songs—*August 6th and 9th*, *Man O’ War*, *The Bells of Morning*, etc. But it’s been some time since I wrote something that could be considered political. Then earlier this year, in the midst of a writing spree, a song came to me.

A little background is needed here. Last spring I took myself off to a friend’s cabin in the B.C. mountains with my guitars, pencils, paper, and a few bags of groceries. I hunkered down for a week of writing as my new album deadlines were looming. One of the very last items I picked up before heading into the wilds was a magazine with Donald Trump in full sneer on the cover.

The word blowhard has always intrigued me and, somewhere around the second day of writing, the cover shot of Trump and that word crystallized in a new song. *Blowhard Nation* is topical for sure and has even been called “... the first great political protest song in a looong time...and you can dance to it,” (thanks Terry David Mulligan, CKUA).

Even as I wrote it, I thought *Blowhard Nation* would have a short shelf life since there was no possible way on Earth that Trump was going to become the Republican presidential candidate. But as the nomination process ground to its excruciating conclusion and Trump emerged as the GOP candidate, and as England Brexited, the unthinkable happened (twice!) and I got scared. So, now I had a song that expressed my feelings of incredulity about current global politics and the ascension of one of the most reviled (or revered!) humans in recent history and I wanted people to hear it.

Now, as you may have noticed, we musicians (out of necessity) have had to master the game of marketing ourselves from the grassroots up. As we watched the record industry wither and die in the dust bowl brought on by file-sharing a decade ago, it became apparent that we would have to step into the harness and assume the roles and tasks previously handled by the record companies, namely marketing, branding, publicity, etc.

Similarly, as print media falls under the digital wheels of the Internet, another link in the old chain of publicity and profile is disappearing rapidly and artists are being forced to find new and ever more complex channels to reach their audience.

Remember the old days when the fans stalked the artists? Well, that paradigm has shifted. Now the artists stalk the fans, enticing them out of the woods with enriched stories and free content, garnering ‘retweets’ and ‘likes’ as we hashtag our way onto the tablets and phones of Jay and Jo Public by linking our art with viral trends. It’s like trying to snag a passing locomotive with a coat hanger.

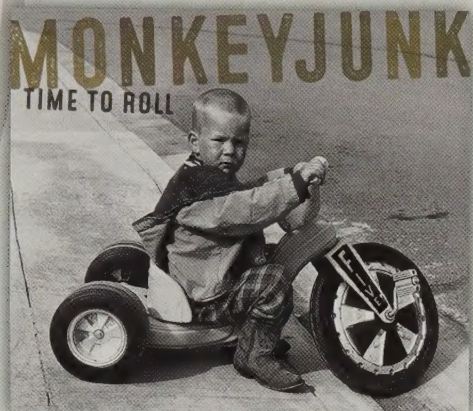
So when my small, but determined, team of data ninjas and I released *Blowhard Nation*, we worked every angle: a lot of tweeting before, during, and after each election debate; digging in the Facebook mines; and sending out flocks of Soundcloud links and Bitly urls like homing pigeons (to see what generated the most clicks and downloads). We donated half my proceeds from the sale of the single to War Child Canada; how sweet to send money to the very people the Trumps of this world are throwing onto the trash heap.

I can honestly say we only missed a few tricks (we didn’t release a YouTube video for the song—most consumers outside the folk world are now watching their music, not listening to it), but we did send links to all the folk DJs and to CBC, NPR, and CKUA. We targeted the fans, music influencers, political wonks, and anybody who might find a story in the song. In short, we covered the waterfront... and the result? Mostly crickets.

So why didn’t the song catch? Perhaps I shouldn’t have released it as a single (many media outlets no longer want to deal with singles). Possibly Americans aren’t interested in what Canadians think (hah!), and Canadians are only interested in what Americans think. Maybe, like Dylan in ’65, folks have turned away from political songs because the genre is too confining. Perhaps comedians such as John Oliver and Samantha Bee are ‘the next Bob Dylan’. Or it could be that people are tired of musicians making political commentary (except Gord Downie—bless his lionheart!). It’s also conceivable that the tune sucks. Have a listen and decide for yourself—<http://bit.ly/2dPc8Q1>.

So why am I writing this? Sour grapes? Perhaps. Maybe I’m just riffing on the old supermarket trick of turning last week’s fresh meat into this week’s chicken pot pie. Or it could be I’m simply posting a selfie for you, the folk fans and musicians, to show how the order is rapidly fading...for the times they are a changin’.

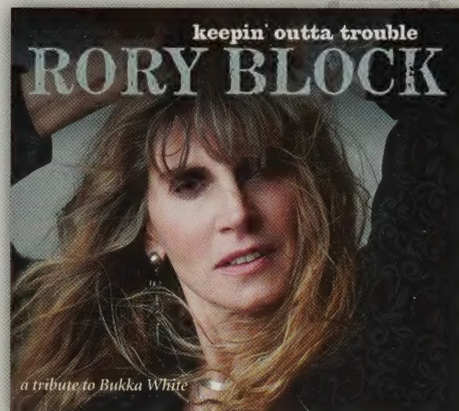
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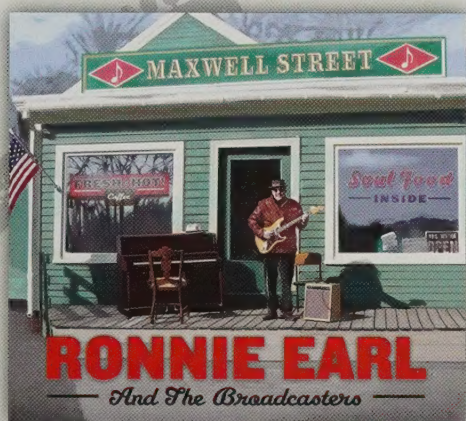


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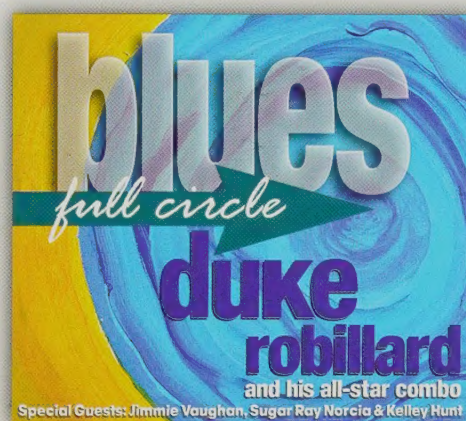


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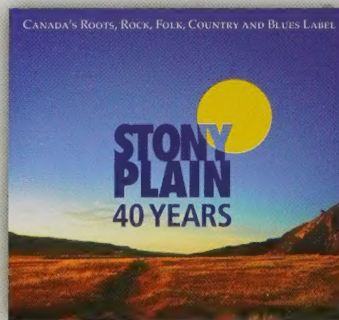


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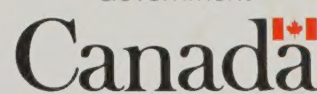
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